
**Narrative means towards literacy
understandings: Exploring transformations
within literacies and migrating identities.**

*An analysis of narrative reflections towards the
development of critical reflective thinking by mature
students in a classroom of wider access.*

Thesis presented for the Degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in the Department of Psychology,

UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN

January 2014

by

Catherine Mary Hutchings

Student number: HTCCAT001

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Acknowledgements

Thank you to all the students who allowed me to use their journals and assignment drafts as data for this research. It was a great privilege to get to read your narratives and share in your experiences.

I am deeply grateful for the support I have received through this journey from my supervisor, Sally Swartz. I appreciate all your time, reading, feedback, critiques, suggestions and patience, as well as the encouragement, motivation and nurturance you provided for me. I am incredibly lucky to have had you as a supervisor.

I also wish to express my gratitude and appreciation to Lyn Holness for the support provided from the ERP and your personal follow-ups, and Henning Snyman for your mentorship and initial engagement and interest, which got me going, Brenda Liebowitz for your constant checking up, discussions, reading and working together, Vivienne Bozalek for your support and working together in our Pomodoro sessions, Lucia Thesen, for hearing my ideas out, Moeain Arend and Gideon Nomdo for our empathizing and supportive coffee discussions and Rose Jackson for your editing and encouragement.

In addition, I am grateful to my sons and my friends for looking after me through it all and for waiting for the abandonment party in good cheer.

I wish to thank the NRF for their award of a Sabbatical grant to complete a Doctoral degree.

Catherine

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Thesis title: Narrative means towards literacy understandings: Exploring transformations within literacies and migrating identities.

Date: December 2013

Abstract

An analysis of narrative reflections towards the development of critical reflective thinking by mature students in a classroom of wider access: This thesis reports on the narratives of transitions undergone by adult students, mostly speakers of English as an additional language at an English language dominated institution, in returning to studies at postgraduate level, often after breaks in which they had established themselves in their professional and social worlds. The transitions relate to their senses of self, their understandings of (socially constructed) allowances within the higher educational institution, their understandings of what constitutes learning, knowledge and meaning making, and their own roles in these processes, including the agency they take on in the process. In examining how agency is adopted, I look at the development of reflective functioning as reported by these students. I consider the development of, and changes in the 'voice' of the adult student learner/writer, as reported by them and evident in their own writing, both formal and informal. I investigate this within the framework of New Literacy Studies, in which reading and writing are regarded as aspects of literacy (and learning) practices, along with other aspects of discourses, including attitudes, understandings, values, beliefs and general practices of learning, knowledge, meaning making and conceptions of understanding. In addition, in reflecting on what students have said, or the stories they have given about their experiences, I have drawn on aspects of narrative theory in psychology and education, whereby, learners (and others) determine their experiences and outcomes by what they tell themselves of these stories. The stories students tell themselves affect the responsibility or agency they take on in their learning and writing, and this affects the sort of voice that is evident in their writing.

My data comprise of compilations of dialogical journals written by students between each other and myself in a course I taught, aiming to help them towards an awareness of themselves as learners and writers within their learning. The original purpose of these dialogical journals was one of pedagogic intent. The exercise was intended as an endeavour to provide an access route into the academy for the students: to practice writing English in a non-threatening 'environment', to promote the development of reflective and critical thinking and self-awareness as academic writers, and in the dialogical nature, to encourage a community of practice. My role in this exercise was to steer them towards reflective construction through my responses and general journal prompts, and to promote engagement with each other in their learning community. The journals became data for research as a secondary intention when, upon reflecting on the journals

myself, I became aware that they provided useful illustrations of students' transitions in 'interpretive frameworks'; their means of making sense, their engagements within new knowledge communities and of their migrations of identities.

For many adult learners, becoming ensconced within understood, or socially or institutionally constructed practices, and being able to replicate the practices or discourses of the institution as viable or acceptable and institutionally recognizable selves and voices within it, requires a major transition. This involves long migratory journeys across differing attitudes, beliefs, values, and ways of thinking and behaving. In this, the development of reflective functioning, the taking on of agency, and the sounding out of voice, all require attention and often, new learning.

University of Cape Town

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Chapter 1

Introduction and Background

Statement of research problem

Currently, there is an international trend towards widened access to higher educational institutions. This has brought an increasingly diverse range of students into classrooms. Being ‘non-traditional’ in terms of their educational backgrounds and extensive life experiences, this new population of students poses challenges to the traditions of higher education and to learning and teaching in these institutions.

In teaching ‘traditional’ students, educators in higher educational institutions rely on assumptions of their engagement with their students being part of a continuous (relatively unbroken) developmental journey towards the establishment of a literate or ‘educated’ identity. The traditional student is middle class, ‘schooled’ in the academic mode, in terms of language, reading, writing, speaking, argumentation, ownership of knowledge and opinion, and possession of voice. Usually formal learning involves a specific time line and progression, with short breaks, if any, between students’ educational levels (primary, secondary and tertiary). It also involves general support through students’ education: from the family as caregivers emotionally and financially, and from the social environment, for example, with acknowledged allowances, identifiers and ‘spaces’ being made for the typical learner or student at the different educational levels. Normally, the traditional student is able, or quickly becomes able, in the dominant language and discourse.

However, with policies of widened access (in South Africa, where this study took place, and globally), institutions are now attracting, amongst other groups, older students, from various social and economic backgrounds, who typically come with already established professional identities, families for whom they are responsible and interruptions of various durations in their educational development. Such students are often referred to as

non-traditional' students, 'mature students' or 'adult learners'¹. As learners at a higher educational institution, these students are likely to differ from 'traditional' students in terms of their expectations, experiences and the challenges related to their learning, as well as their identity (sense of self) and agency (capacity to act) within their learning environment.

Furthermore, the transformations experienced at higher educational institutions by mature students may differ from those of students who have followed uninterrupted academic paths: they are likely to have established social and professional identities and also to have established practices of thinking and relating to knowledge. Such factors are not often taken into account within the courses they are offered. Although such students often arrive with social and professional authority, subjectively they have little in the way of academic standing, and hence their experiences at the academic institution are likely to involve a repositioning of themselves, their ways of thinking, and their interactions with bodies of knowledge. A detailed discussion of literature about what may be involved in the transition to higher education for such students is offered in Chapter 2.

In coming to an institution of higher education, students bring with them an *anticipated* identity related, certainly to status and ability. Sfard and Prusak regard identity as being 'a set of reifying, significant, endorsable stories about a person' (2005:14). They claim that learning could be considered as closing the gap between 'two sets of reifying significant stories about the learner that the learner endorses: 'actual identity', which consists 'of stories about the actual state of affairs', and 'designated identity', which consists 'of narratives presenting a state of affairs which, for one reason or another, is *expected* to be the case, if not now then, in the future' (Sfard & Prusak, 2005:18).

For the mature student, it is likely that entering academia poses greater risks in terms of repositioning identities, than those facing young students recently out of school. For example, for mature students, having an already established professional identity can cause conflict between that and new requirements in the academy. In addition, part of the

¹ The term 'adult learner' is used in two ways in the literature; sometimes referring to learners who are returning to studies, and sometimes to those who begin to study in adulthood.

transition to higher education is concerned with new ways of thinking or constructing meaning, much of which has implications for new ways of writing, a major form of communication (and of meaning construction) in the academic context. In order to write successfully in the academic context, the individual needs to adopt a sense of agency in writing – an authorial identity. In other words, in entering higher educational institutions, such students have to become involved in a process of deconstructing and renegotiating both their literacy experiences and their identities (social, professional, academic).

For most mature or ‘non-traditional’ students, their ‘relocation’ from their social and professional contexts into academia also requires a shift from one discursive positioning (within their professional context) to another (within their academic context). The positioning of self in academia is closely aligned with critical thinking in reading and writing, writer awareness and attitudes towards learning and the (social) learning environment. By ‘critical thinking’, I am referring to active cognitive functioning, or thought and reflection in response to information encountered, involving mental processes such as interpreting, examining, analysing, evaluating, reasoning, conceptualising and inferring. In fact, the construction of self, or identity – as a writer, reader and learner – is an essential element of critical thinking, as it requires the positioning of self, individually (within the self), and in relation to others (within the social context).

The transition to higher education often requires a shift in responsibility in students towards and for learning, and recognition of the need for students’ own agency in their learning. The idea of learning being something that is constructed by the learner, rather than transmitted by the teacher, is possibly a new idea and practice to many mature students in South Africa; they are likely to have come from classroom environments which are teacher-focused and content-oriented, where the learning practices are transmissive, involving little reflection or dialogue – rather than student-focused and learning-oriented environments and more constructivist practices, which rely on reflective activities. Moll and Slonimsky (1989) explain how different academic contexts presuppose different kinds of activity, for example, a rote-learning context involves

surface processing only (in other words, primitive forms of cognitive activity such as perceiving, reading and memorising, which do not entail reversibility. But deep-processing (such as that entailed at post graduate level in the Humanities departments) entails different levels of abstraction, such as memorising, self-conscious monitoring of one's own cognitive processes and monitoring of the validity and truth criteria of different formulations of knowledge. As universities require critical thinking, which, by implication, involves reflection and dialogue, the challenges of non-traditional students in their studies at higher educational institutions are loaded.

The ability to reflect and enter into dialogue implies a (re-)construction of selfhood or identity. Identity is not a product; it is not static. Identity is an ever-evolving sense within the individual. It is 'held', maintained and positioned, through various frameworks, such as those provided by professional, social and academic contexts. But it is also ever-informed by experiences. In other words, a sense of identity is constructed, in large part, according to the expectations and relations (inter-subjectivities) existing within the contexts that the individual inhabits. However, each of these contexts shifts identity into a different composition. Thus, whilst being 'held' or contained, it is constantly repositioned, both within and across different contexts.

Whilst national context is an important factor, the challenges raised by widened access for a diverse student population constitutes an issue for higher educational institutions globally. In his speech on higher education in the UK in 2000, the Secretary of State for Education, David Blunkett, commented that expanding access to the higher educational sector in the country had, up until that point, meant simply 'stretching' a system that had been designed for an elite, in order to include a wider and more socially diverse group of students. He continued to explain that as the new global economy is dependent on 'innovation and ideas, skills and knowledge', it brings about challenges for higher education:

World class higher education ensures that countries can grow and sustain high-skill businesses, and attract and retain the most highly-skilled people. It endows people with creative and moral capacities, thinking skills and depth knowledge that underpin our economic competitiveness and our wider quality of life. It is therefore at the heart of the productive capacity of the new economy and the prosperity of our democracy.

(Blunkett, 2000)

The challenges include ‘new forms of virtual distance learning and new international institutional alliances’. He claims ‘There is no doubt that globalisation and the arrival of the knowledge economy have intensified the competitive pressures on higher education institutions. Learning has become big business. Demand for higher learning is growing at exponential rates’ (ibid), and he points out that prospective students and other stakeholders need to be confident of the quality of the education they can expect to receive (despite wider access, larger classes, fewer funds and new forms of learning).

Rather than widening participation serving to create a misfit between the institution’s system and the new types of students (and learning) it accepts, Thompson argues for the need to create new spaces and practices, to re-theorise the discourse and to ‘operate dialectically and strategically within and against the systems in which we work’ (2000:6). In other words, in considering the specific needs of the students now accepted into our institutions, there is a need to look at the institutional system (of the growing diverse student population) and design something new and more appropriate. In fact, historically, the ‘Academic Development’ movement in South Africa evolved from what was known in the 80s as ‘Academic Support’ with the recognition in the late 80’s, that rather than the issue of students being ‘underprepared’ for higher education, in fact, ‘universities were underprepared for the task of embracing the diversity that would characterise student populations following a shift to democracy’ (Boughey & Niven, 2012:40). These authors continue to explain that this evolution also involved a commitment to research which attempts to understand students' experiences in higher education, using critical social theories. They relate concerns about ‘epistemological access’; the provision of ‘access to the academic ways of knowing that sustain the universities – rather than the merely formal access needed to register as a student’ (Boughey & Niven, 2012:40).

In order to increase the possibility of catering for educational experiences that are of value to formerly ‘non-traditional’ students, research into their higher educational experiences is imperative. This research needs to include analyses of the transitions they undergo, of their ‘interpretive frameworks’ and engagements within the new knowledge

communities they enter, including the development of agency in their writing, and the migrations of identities that are involved in these processes. Boughey (2010) points out that for South African students, the transition to university often requires a change in the understanding of learning – from a ‘reproductive’ conception of learning – where knowledge is seen as a commodity, so the learner must repeat back what they have read or been told by their teacher – to a ‘constructive’ conception of learning, where, as a result of what is read or taught, existing knowledge is transformed into new knowledge; new knowledge is assimilated with existing knowledge and thus transformed.

A prime pursuit of academia is the construction of meaning, where ‘meaning’ or ‘knowledge’ comes about through the interplay of text and reader, or writer and text or through debate between the individual and others. This often requires new ways of thinking for learners. An important means of both manifesting and sharing, or exhibiting constructions of meaning is through writing. This applies particularly in the Humanities disciplines, where two very important objectives in approaching academic writing are the development of critical thinking and of an authorial identity. These can require a range of renegotiations of ideas within the learner. A prime one is the concept of ‘voice’ in learning and writing, and a change from repeating voices of others to voicing one’s own identity. Related to this is another change, whereby writing is seen ‘as a process that generates new learning rather than one that reproduces someone else’s old learning’ (Boughey, 2010:285).

A shift in language is often another important factor affecting such transformations for many mature students in South Africa. (An explication of the educational situation in the country follows shortly.) I believe that the extent to which one is ‘at home’ with the home language of the institution can determine the extent of access and enablement, both felt and experienced, in different discourses and genres within the language. Adopting another language entails adapting to its discourse practices, understandings of meanings and other nuances within different social and cultural contexts. These are not usually taught directly in higher educational courses. In fact, Gee (1989; 2007) stresses that discourses are *acquired*, rather than learnt or taught. In addition, the institution itself has

its own 'language'; institutional discursive practices serve to exclude and include individuals from particular social groups. Thus in this context, these students enter as 'outsiders'.

The transition to higher education also requires new ways of behaving within the discourse of the institution. For example, in contrast to everyday discourse and professional discourse, Northedge points out that

Students find that nothing in academic discourse is to be taken for granted. Everything must be questioned, particularly that which seems normal and natural. Debate is regarded as the lifeblood of the community. All views must be justified by argument and evidence. An essay which presents only one view and no criticism does not get a good mark. Switching nimbly between views is taken as a sign, not of untrustworthiness, but of breadth of understanding.
(2003a:26)

Thus, the transformations expected of and experienced by non-traditional, mature students are primarily in new ways of thinking (hopefully) due to the development of new knowledge and skills, and therefore, new ways of being and relating, new ideas, self-conception and new ways in relating to others (this, in terms of dialogue and critical thinking).

Supplemental information: A brief insight into access and widened access to Higher Education in South Africa

Whilst South Africa shares many of the global challenges brought with widening participation in higher education, the country also has its own peculiarities of widened participation in relation to colonialism, apartheid and its new democracy. The particular challenges of widening participation in higher education in South Africa are due to the different educational systems of the apartheid era, and, as Badat (2009; 2010) repeatedly emphasises, to the fact that the university curricula are generally colonial. In this section I very briefly, outline changes in the structure of South Africa's higher education system and institutions, from the apartheid era, through to almost two decades into the new democracy. I briefly point to some of the challenges faced by higher education policy and institutions in the country as a result of these transformations, and I present some

statistical data regarding higher education participation rates nationally and, by comparison, from the (elite and former white) institution in which this study took place. It is now two decades since apartheid ended and a democratic government was put into place, however, the process of restructuring the educational system at all levels, from primary to tertiary, has been fraught with challenges. There are still vast inequities in the education system, at all levels. The birth of democracy held dreams of radical transformations in access to and success in education. However, these did not materialise. According to Le Roux and Breier (2007), there has been little improvement in educational opportunities for almost two thirds of the black South African population. They attribute the lack of transformation in enrolment trends in higher education to a combination of four factors: a lack of transformation in primary and secondary education, a decline in government funding for higher education², an inept funding formula for higher educational institutions and inefficient interventions and management of the sector. Although black student enrolments did increase across higher education institutions after democracy, and, whilst access to all institutions was open to all population groups, according to policy, this apparent access was thwarted for people who had received an inferior education, and due to socio-economic and geographic factors. Throughput and graduation rates for black and coloured students are slower and starkly less than those for white and Indian students (Le Roux & Breier, 2007; Scott et al., 2013). Lange states, 'Equity of access was not accompanied by equity of success' (2012:51). She points out that rather than merely dismantling apartheid, it needed 'to be replaced with a system able to undo its effects' (2012: 48). Debates and practices about widening participation in the country have thus focused on making the higher educational institutions, curricula, and teaching and knowledge practices, accessible to, and their degrees attainable by, all population groups. This has required both national and institutional debate and initiatives; the issues and initiatives in the institutions themselves would differ according to their history and geographical position.

Badat paints a vivid picture of the effects of apartheid and colonialism on education and society:

² Overall, government funding for higher education in South Africa is restricted, and is generally lower than countries with similar economies (Leibowitz, 2012; Leibowitz and Bozalek, 2014).

Under colonialism and apartheid, social, political and economic discrimination and inequalities of class, race and gender profoundly shaped South African higher education, establishing patterns of systemic inclusion and marginalisation of particular social classes and groups. ... [I]ntellectual discourse, teaching and learning, curriculum and texts, and knowledge production and research were strongly affected by the racist, patriarchal and authoritarian apartheid social order, and the socio-economic and political priorities of the apartheid separate development programme.

(Badat 2009:457-458)

He continues to explain that although some economic and social shifts did happen after 1994, the demise of the apartheid government and birth of the new democracy, the country remains ‘a highly unequal society in terms of disparities in wealth, income, opportunities and living conditions’ (Badat 2009:458). In fact, the country has one of the highest GINI co-efficients in the world and one of the highest levels of inequality (Leibowitz & Bozalek, 2014).

The apartheid public schooling system consisted of three departments of education; one for white children, which received the most government funding and resources, one for coloured and South African Indian children, and one for black³ children, referred to as ‘Bantu Education’, which was the least funded and most poorly resourced, yet which catered for the biggest population. There was a further stark difference between resources and funding for rural and urban schools. Learners at these public schools were educated, or moulded for futures expected of them as deemed by the apartheid regime. Thus black children, within the Bantu education system, were not expected to study further and were moulded towards manual and domestic labour, so academic subjects in their schooling were less prioritised (Chisholm, 1983). For these reasons, black people going into higher educational institutions did so from less advantaged educational backgrounds than white people.

Correspondingly, Lange (2012) describes South Africa’s pre-democracy (1994), higher education sector as being divided along racial, ethnic, linguistic and geographical lines. Institutions catered to specific groups and specific languages in specific locations; thus, reinforcing the related socio-economic structures that were in place. Furthermore, with separate institutions established for the different population groups, some of them were

³ Under Apartheid, people were classified according to their race: ‘black’ referred to people with a dark skin and historically African heritage, ‘coloured’ referred to people with a historically mixed African and European heritage, ‘Indian’ referred to people with and African-Indian heritage and ‘white’ to people with a European heritage.

limited to offering only programmes deemed suitable for the particular targeted population group; ‘A historically black university (HBU) was therefore more likely to offer nursing rather than medicine, and public administration rather than political philosophy’ (Bozalek & Boughey, 2012:691). HBU’s focused on teaching, whereas, in addition to teaching, research took place in historically white universities (HWU’s). Rather than one higher education system, there were 36 institutions of higher education, comprising 21 universities and 15 technikons (offering vocational education) (Lange, 2012). In addition, there were 120 colleges of education, 24 nursing colleges, and 11 agricultural colleges (Badat, 2010).

As a result of investigations and consultations by the National Commission on Higher Education, established in 1995, shortly after the first democratic elections, the Educational White paper, No. 3, 1997, provided recommendations for a National Plan for Higher Education (NPHE), aimed to redress past inequities and transform the higher educational system in the country. Following the NPHE proposals, the number of higher education institutions was reduced from 36 to 23, with some being merged or incorporated into others. These institutions fell into three types, all designated as ‘universities’: traditional universities (11), universities of technology (UoT’s) (6) and ‘comprehensive’ universities (6; 1 of which was distance based), which offered a mix of academic and vocational programmes (Bozalek & Boughey, 2012; Badat, 2010). The former colleges of education had, by 2001, either merged with other institutions or closed (Badat, 2010).

Scott et al. point out that, ‘increasing the access and completion rates of African and coloured students [in higher education] depends much on addressing the social and economic factors’ (2013:54). They categorise the factors affecting performance in higher education under material, affective and academic factors. In terms of material factors, despite the growth of a black middle class in South Africa, they state that most black students come from low-income families, unable to provide financial support for higher education pursuits. In terms of affective factors, they relate to their previous research which found that ‘the benefits of well-designed educational interventions can be

neutralised by lack of motivation, anxiety about personal or financial circumstances, or alienation from the institution' (2013:56). They add that if students are not coping academically, it could have an effect on their confidence, motivation and general wellbeing. In terms of academic factors, they claim that whilst poor schooling and socioeconomic conditions are undoubtedly causes of under-preparedness in students, the issue of what this under-preparedness means and how it can be overcome needs to be considered;

Underpreparedness manifests itself in a range of ways, from struggling in the formal curriculum to difficulty with adjusting to independent study and a university environment. It takes different forms in different subject areas but the common feature in all settings is that what the students know and can do – attainments that were good enough to gain them entry to higher education – do not match the expectations of the institution. (Scott et al., 2013:57)

Although there is now a growing number of black middle class families, as Badat and Sayed (2014) point out, the historical geographical patterns of advantage and disadvantage were still replicated in the spread across the institutions. Historically black institutions (HBI's) were generally populated by working class and poor rural students, while historically white institutions (HWI's) were populated by students from middle class families. They comment, 'if equity of opportunity and outcomes were previously strongly affected by race, they are now also conditioned by social class and geography' (2014:134).

What follows is a glimpse into the statistical picture of the situation in the country. In comparing university headcounts in the country between 1984 (ten years before democracy) and 1998 (four years into democracy), Cooper and Subotsky (2001) found that the headcount for whites dropped from 66% of the total headcount to 36%, and that for blacks rose from 21% of the total university headcount to 52%. In comparing the 1996 national population census percentages, (77% black, 9% coloured, 3% SA Indian, 11% white), with the proportion of student headcounts in the universities in 1998, (52% black, 5% coloured, 7% S.A. Indian, 36% white), Cooper and Subotsky (2001) show that in the university system in 1998, there was an under-representation of black and coloured students and an over-representation of South African Indians and whites. In contrast to the general proportion of student headcounts in higher education in the country, the institution at which my study was instigated, considered an elite university and being

historically white, has a somewhat inverted pattern. According to the data I obtained from the institutional information unit on the proportion of student headcounts at the university for 1999: 27% of the university's population was black, 14% was coloured, 7% was Indian, and 52% was white. (An overview of changes in student enrolments at this institution between 1994 and 2011, is presented at the end of this chapter.) The Council on Higher Education (CHE, 2009), lists the changing proportions of black⁴ and white students in the national higher education population in 1995 and 2007. It is notable that in 2007, whites comprised 10% of the country's total population, and blacks 79%. However, of these, the proportion of black students shifted from 43% to 63%, and the white students from 39% to 24%. (As I will show shortly, in 2007, black students comprised 18% of the student population at the institution at which my study was conducted, and whites 36%). Badat (2010), states that due to persisting inequities in educational backgrounds and social and economic backgrounds, and western knowledge systems at the institutions, the gross participation rate of black and coloured South Africans is still much lower than for white South Africans⁵.

Rationale for this study

The notion of widening participation in terms of 'non-traditional' students, I think, has been shadowed by the various transitions into democracy in South Africa – with the merging, relabeling, and reconstituting of higher education institutions. I have found little data on the proportion of South African higher education that is drawn from 'non-traditional' groups – as the term itself has changed in its social construction, pre- and post-democracy. Leibowitz points out that 'while many universities have developed policies to advance the recognition of prior learning and experience, very few use these policies for the benefit of mature students who lack formal learning rather than for the credentialing of students with alternative study options' (2012b:11). With the experience of adult students being insufficiently captured, I hope to make a contribution through this study.

⁴ Some statistical reports use the term 'African' to refer to black people as distinct from coloured, white and South African Indian people. In my reporting of these data, I have taken the liberty of changing statistical labels of 'African' to 'black', as most South Africans will declare themselves to be 'African', regardless of the racial category they may fall into.

⁵ It is important to note that although nationally, black headcounts rose dramatically after 1988, the majority of blacks went to HBUs and technikons or distant UNISA; a small number actually went to historically advantaged universities.

Due to a relatively superficial awareness of the transformations that these students have to make and experience, the many reasons for this, and the effects of the transformation on their self-concepts and their academic performance as measured by the institution, I wish to look closely at the experiences of such students. This is in order to understand more about the transformations that they need to make and to experience, especially in terms of the construction of meaning and thinking required and present in writing. For this, I wish to study the changes that occur and how they occur, in terms of students' voice and agency in writing and learning, reflective and critical thinking and their senses of themselves during these transformations. I regard the journey of such transformations as one of 'migrating identities'. This is a term I am borrowing from the theory of Narrative therapy, where individuals move from one way of seeing themselves or being seen in relation to their environment to a new way of being. Smith and Winslade (1997), for example, report on their study of men migrating from the regimen of alcohol, and Hughes (2007) reports on migrations from addict to non-addict amongst former drug users. In a similar vein, my study examines the migrations of students as they move from outside the academy to becoming members of it in terms of their changing relationships to and practices in literacy practices. My focus here is not on students' actual formal academic writing, but on what they have written about their academic writing experiences and influences, in journals they have written to each other, (in informal writing styles), reflecting on their literacy experiences. This study focuses on students' experiences of their journeys. The study is limited due to the lack of an analysis of their formal writing and lecturers' opinions on students' writing.

My concerns relate to improving issues of access to higher educational institutions for such students. That is, access considered more broadly than simply in terms of entry, as that which gives acknowledgement to student paths to and through the institution. Currently, our institutions remain underprepared for these students. I hope that my research will contribute towards new understandings around mature students' social and institutional experiences and the challenges they encounter in their learning and their

writing at an institution of higher education. I hope it will contribute to a more informed teaching and learning environment; one that makes good use of diversity.

Context of this study

This research took place in the context of a university environment in South Africa. My interest in this area of research arises from my own experiences of having taught a course to a class of mature students registered for a postgraduate degree. Students were accepted into this postgraduate degree on the basis of having completed a 4 year Diploma in Education. This was part of a policy of open access which provided a gateway for previously disadvantaged students to gain a university qualification. However, many of the students accepted were not yet adequately prepared for the formal academic requirements of the degree. Students presented with little experience and few skills in academic literacy practices.

The course I taught was implemented in order to provide structured and intensive guided assistance to these students to facilitate their access to postgraduate study. (The notion of access also contains within it the promise of managing to attain the qualification.) Having arrived with little focus on formal academic literacy skills in their educational experiences, challenges arose in the form of the staff at the institution expecting them to understand the basic requirements of academic literacy, to be able to read and write, critically and analytically, and to be acquainted with aspects of the academic institution such as the library and computers. As a result of these taken-for-granted attitudes on the part of academic staff, students often floundered and staff often felt frustrated.

This research was conducted over two years and in both years, the class was diverse in terms of linguistic, educational and cultural backgrounds. As a means of enabling their acquaintance with me, the institution and the practice of writing, I initiated the activity of dialogical journal writing as a course task. Dialogical journaling is a practice of informal writing (as opposed to academic writing), between a learner and teacher or peer. Through this, I endeavoured to provide an access route into academe for the students in my class, incorporating the experiences they brought with them, and attempting to promote the

development of critical thinking, reflection and self-awareness in students as academic writers.

Whilst the exercise was initiated as a pedagogic strategy, I later realised that these narratives yielded a rich source of information and potential data for analysis of a range of issues. These, included transitions in students constructions of themselves, their positioning (and repositioning) within their social context, their attitudes towards knowledge and learning, and of their means of constructing meaning and the realization of agency in their learning and writing. My research is thus practise-led; initially the endeavour was not one that began with the intention of using it for formal research purposes. A secondary reason for my decision to use the journals for further research purposes was that, whilst still convinced of its benefits, I found journaling to be a very time consuming task, for both myself and for the students, and with large classes, was, in fact, not sustainable. Thus it made sense that I use the endeavour to better understand the *problem* so as to seek more sustainable solutions.

I provide a more comprehensive description of the course in the background section of this chapter. In Chapter 3, I provide justification for, and an outline of the dialogical journaling exercise.

Profile of the participants

In order to begin to provide a rich sociological and philosophical contextual picture, I briefly specify here some of the experiences and challenges that were brought to the institution by the students involved as participants in this study. My claims here are based on what I learnt from my engagements with these students and my interpretations of their journal writings. My claims about the students' attitudes towards learning, reading, writing and knowledge are illustrated in the analysis sections (Chapters 5-7). Biographical detail of the sample profile is given in my Methodology section, in Chapter 4. A more comprehensive coverage of these issues, based on what was written in their journals, is given in the descriptive section of the analysis in Chapter 5.

Both of the classes were diverse in terms of students' languages, cultural backgrounds, educational backgrounds, work experience, home and family situations, as well as their reasons for doing the degree. For example, some appeared to be motivated by professional advancement rather than by the idea of intellectual advancement. Generally, their motivation for undertaking this education was to return to their professions with promotion in view, rather than undertaking it for the indulgence of learning and their future intentions. Most of them had families to maintain and most of them had established professions (and related social status), yet almost none of them would have spoken of themselves as having an academic identity.

Most of the students in my sample were educators based in schools. The schools were their professional discourse environments, where the business of education is carried out, rather than academic discourse environments, where they are involved in the pursuit of knowledge making amongst themselves. For example, few had made use of libraries or had had to write an essay before. Few were computer literate. Their professional roles ranged in terms of administrative, leadership and teaching positions, which in themselves vary in terms of level and subject specialities. The school environments in which they taught ranged from poor rural to international elite private institutions. In addition, there were differences in their student and related social roles; some were full-time students, residing away from their home environments and others were part-time students, having to continue to manage their normal daily family and work commitments. Many of the students were the first in their families to attend higher educational institutions, and as a result, held high status in their communities. Despite their amassed experience in the field and diverse backgrounds – in their own education and teaching situations, language and resources, they were seen as lacking, both by themselves and within the institution. This perceived lack was usually related to their academic capabilities and knowledge. Their different learning and knowledge cultures manifest as an apparent gap when they transfer to higher education.

From what I learnt from them, initially, most of these students were either afraid of writing or regarded it as an onerous task. Furthermore, they seemed altogether weary of

regarding themselves as writers, due, I believe, to what they were or were not taught about it at school. Most seem to have learnt about writing as a means of achieving marks; pleasing their teachers by putting down the ‘right’ words and notes required, rather than a means of formulating their own thoughts or ideas. Based on my discussions with these students, I believe that when they arrived at the institution, the majority of them took at face value, the instrumental property of writing, seeing it simply as a means to an end; a product required for assessment. Initially, few seemed to have learnt to see writing as the means through which knowledge might be created rather than simply a mechanism of transmission. In addition, few seemed to understand that, for this reason, writing should not be an act which happens at the end of their learning, for example, when they know what they want to say and have all their points of argument lined up neatly. Through their previous education, few had come to see writing as an essential part of their learning, through which they get to ‘play’ with the ideas they need to learn about and establish a relationship with those ideas, and that the final product is then a consummation of the relationship, in which they are engaged, they have a voice and an authority over their own understanding of the ideas they have come across or discovered. It is also possible that the practice of learning from reading was not acquired at an early stage of their schooling, and therefore, most of these students tended to have more distanced or cooler relationships with their readings.

Research question

My research question is:

How is ‘voice’ transformed through emerging reflective functioning and agency in the development of an authorial identity in the academic institution?

Underlying this question are the following further lines of enquiry:

What transformations occur through the development of new ways of constructing meaning in academic thought and writing, and how do these relate to migrations of identity in mature students coming to study at an institution of Higher Education?

Research aims and objectives

In order to answer the research question, the aims of my research have been operationalized in the following ways. The data will be used to arrive at a detailed

understanding of changes or developments that occur in the positioning of the self in writing and learning by mature students at a Higher Educational institution. In this process, voice will be used as an index of changes to senses of self and identity. Specifically, my objectives are to analyse students' development of voice in their writing. In this regard, I wish to study:

- Students' developing understandings and use of other voices in their writing,
- Students' development in terms of reflective functioning and emerging agency in their learning and writing, and
- Alongside this, their developing senses of self.

By 'voice in writing', I am referring to a sense of the writer's position in what they are relating, which yields a sense of their identity as a writer to the reader. This 'voice' is closely related to the degree of agency the writer takes on in their writing. By 'agency in writing', I am referring to the writer's control and ownership of what they are saying and how they are saying it and this includes a sense of the student writers' own voice. The taking on of agency in writing and in learning requires higher levels of reflective functioning or cognitive action. In this context, what they as writers are showing or telling of themselves – to themselves and to others, constitutes their identity. Furthermore, identity is constituted through use of discourse; as it is discursive, I am looking at the acquisition by these students, in the process of their writing, of a 'discursive identity'.

In order to do this, I study students' language and evident social relationships – both of which can be accessed through analyses of students' narratives and discourse. The narrative or the content of what is said and what students tell themselves and others about themselves, is temporal and unfolding. Narrative includes discourse; the structure (and language) of the content, or *how* it is said. It is through discourse, the structure and language used, that identity is constructed. Such a combination of a study of narrative and discourse enables a 'surface' analysis and a 'latent analysis'. The surface analysis includes students' encounters with what they have to achieve here - events that are spoken about. The latent analysis involves a study of developing register and dialogue with an audience and authorities or with participants, and apparent reflective actions, all

of which contribute towards an understanding of changing concepts of self both within the individual and in social interactions. As I am studying development and change taking place in a group of students through the course of the year, within *migrations* of identity, the temporal dimension is important within both forms of analysis.

An initial note on my key terms: ‘identity’, ‘agency’, ‘voice’

Theory around my key concepts, ‘identity’, ‘agency’ and ‘voice’ will be discussed in detail in Chapter 2. I believe that all three of these concepts are social constructs, for example, a person’s *identity* is constructed in relation to others. I regard identity as being a representation of how the self is seen (by the self and others) in relation to others. This is essentially in terms of social relations and social contexts, such as a learner, a mother, a South African, a foreigner, a teacher, or a product of a disadvantaged educational background. The identity that is constructed has attached to it certain allowances and constraints (in terms of behaviours, values and beliefs) within specific social contexts. In this way it carries certain levels of power. Identities change over time, as new insights are gained and knowledge and understanding are added to, or new meaning is constructed through new experiences.

There is also the *self*. I consider that the self when writing academically, involves the self as reader (of other voices and ideas), as relator of other voices, as writer (within or amongst other voices), and as reflector (of other voices and ideas, of one’s own ideas and of one’s own writing). The learner writer at the university has to pick up on each of these.

I think that a person’s *sense of self* is also a positioning or identity, but specifically in relation to how the self is perceived within that other identity and within the constructs of that identity; how the self is construed. It comes with different levels of allowance, for example, in an academic environment, one may see oneself as not as equipped or knowledgeable as others and therefore as not belonging. Such a construal does not allow one to ‘speak with authority’ in the environment. In other words, a sense of self also entails power that one attributes to oneself and is perceived as being attributed by the social environment in terms of what is constructed as being ‘allowed’ of the self. In the

academic environment, this can affect the tone of the ‘voice’ used in writing, for example, submissive, unconfident, servile or confident and engaging, and the type of narrated self, for example, as a learner or an authority. This differs from *self-esteem* which I use to refer to confidence of the self within specific identities and contexts. A learner’s sense of self determines the essence of learning and what sort of agency is taken on or drawn on, within the construct (and allowances and constraints) perceived.

I regard *agency* of the self as acting with meaning or intention; with cognitive awareness. The concept of agency in learning can be understood as contexts in which the learner actively tries to make meaning, and this can occur at various levels of intensity. In Chapter 2, I highlight two ideas of what agency is in learning and writing – the personal ‘I’, which is performative around the social (identities), and that of manipulating what is said, which is performative around knowledge. So, agency is how one acts out or with that identity and sense of self. Agency refers to being consciously in control of one’s actions and it entails an understanding of the purpose of, or meaning for actions. In writing, this cognitive awareness involves the capacity to reflect on the writer’s self as a writer, as well as an awareness of the reader and thus being able to direct the reader through a narrative or line of argument, requiring an awareness of purpose and direction. An automaton can perform but does not have awareness. Agency implies taking ownership for one’s actions or of what one is stating. In writing, merely repeating someone else’s words (voiceless writing) is false ‘ownership’. Agency in writing is power of the writer; it is interaction exerted in writing. The agent is the do-er; the person in the driver’s seat of the self. Taking agency means being able to steer and direct – which implies a sense of direction or an end goal or purpose to the ‘journey’, whether it is exploring or getting to a specific point, and reflective functioning which lends guidance to what is done by the self. So it requires a relationship with or awareness of the environment in which one is steering; a social awareness. Agency is also socially constructed in that an individual’s context, with the (perceived) allowances and constraints it holds, can affect the level of agency adopted. Thus, agency, too, involves power in terms of the ability to do and control. It refers to the power one takes. Agency also implies change – due to actions taken. However, it is not transparently ‘voiced’. On

arrival at the institution, agency is not necessarily visible. I imagine that taking on of agency is rendered more difficult when the learner does not have the cultural capital held by the institution.

Agency in learning is visible in the participation of the learner within the content of their learning and within their community of practice; in this case, the journal relationships, discussion groups and classroom debates. Evidence of agency in learning and agency in writing are slightly different.

In talking of agency in students' writing, I am referring to the author's ability to take on a position of their own; this entails power in being able to direct the reader through an understanding of various perspectives (of others), presented by the author, to a seat beside them on their own viewpoint. This sort of power is attained through the ability to mediate between voices, the writer's experiences (ideas and beliefs), and the requirements of their institution – in terms of both language and discourse.

There are a few senses in which *voice* is spoken about in the context of learning. There is the learner's physical voice. In addition, learners come across many other 'voices': those of their readings, their teachers and their colleagues, in addition to their own ideas, however repressed. 'Voice' is also spoken about, in some disciplines more than others, in relation to students' writing. I regard voice in writing as being the expression of agency. It is how the self is 'heard' or established in writing. It makes agency 'visible'. Voice in learning and writing refers to the expression of self and reflections within an identity role. It is something the learner makes use of; a tool of agency. The learner's agency is what they do with the other voices. However, the 'voice' evident in the written journal or essay can serve as an indication of the agency of the writer. In other words, voice, as I am referring to it here, is how agency can be *seen*. And generally I would say that it is there at first, then becomes lost and then regained. Journals are relatively informal and so I think it is easier (for those who took to the exercise) to maintain their voice throughout. The data in this research project suggests that voice comes out or shows up in journal writing first before it is 'heard' clearly in essay writing. The journal exercise gave opportunity for voice to start to articulate for use in essay writing.

Despite the apparent consensus amongst academic literacy practitioners of the objective to ‘draw out the student’s voice’, or the desire to ‘allow the student voice to be heard’ in their writing, this process does in fact pertain to a chorus of possibilities. It is indeed often a journey through chaos of disparate personalities and of sifting and shaping of these disparate personalities involved in the self of the writer to emerge as an identifiable entity – an agent in the students writing. Consider for example, the different notes of the voices of the learner’s self as reader of other voices or ideas, as relator of other voices, as reflector on other voices, as reflector of and on own ideas or voice, as a voice within or amongst other voices, and as author of their own writing.

Method of analysis

I begin my analysis by using a Grounded Theory approach, categorising my data into coded themes and finding core themes and related peripheral ones. My method of analysis then further involves two forms of inquiry: narrative analysis and discourse analysis. Narrative analysis examines the big structure, whereas discourse analysis examines the actual structuring.

Narrative analysis focuses on what is said; what ‘stories’ are being told, what meaning is constructed, how experiences are made sense of and put together into something meaningful to the narrator and something the narrator sees as being worthwhile to tell or narrate to others about themselves. Whilst dialogical journals may not necessarily be regarded as stories, they are certainly chronicles. I saw the temporal dimension as being important in that I would follow the journal entries sequentially and examine transitions evident in what was being ‘narrated’ to me. The journals as narratives also provide me with access to the students’ individual perspectives on their experiences and performances within their social context. The ‘plot’ in these narratives is the journey from one place to another, whether it is to ‘become an academic’ or simply to get through the course and obtain the degree.

Discourse analysis focuses on a range of practices related to literacy and learning processes, such as ways of thinking, using language, values, and how what is said is structured to convey or reflect the intended and received meaning. Thus here I look at evidence of students' discourse practices as related in their journal writing. Fairclough (1992) describes various forms of social change that take place in terms of definitions of social identities as a result of emphasis on communication skills in workplaces. He gives examples such as changes in relationships between doctors and patients, politicians and the public, and between men and women in the workplace and the family – all of which, he says, 'are partly constituted by new discourse practices' (1992:8). These can be examined in institutions such as educational ones, where changes in relationships with others (social and with texts) and the self, take place.

In terms of an analysis of transforming identities, the development of a discursive identity and the concept of a writer identity would be visible through the student's writing itself, their methods of constructing meaning and their approaches to learning. In academic writing, for example, an authorial presence or sense of the author's agency is essential to a discursive identity. So, too, is the distinction of other voices within the writing. Issues of referencing and plagiarism go to the heart of academic identity, raising questions such as, 'whose property?', 'whose culture?' (and even, 'whose academia?'). Indications of identity are also evident through the register or type of address in the writing, and how the writer engages with the reader also points to their perceptions of the reader in relation to themselves. There are different ways in which the writer can perceive themselves, for example, as a rattler-off of information, as a knowledge producer or as an inquirer. There are also different ways in which the writer can perceive the reader, (if at all), for example, as a spectator, a judge or a partner and sharer of explorations and ideas. Both of these aspects manifest in the student's writing. In terms of what is 'said' in their writing, transformations in terms of how students construct meaning could be examined, for example, by looking at how their ideas change, at the types of reflections they make and at the engagements they undertake or risk. This is in line with Meizerow's (1990) idea of learning as the process of making revised or new interpretations of meaning of an experience, which informs subsequent understandings and actions. Knowledge and ideas

are built on other ideas, and in order to construct knowledge and make meaning, the practice of reflection is needed. Approaches to, and perspectives on, learning relate to agency and identity and changes in these were evident both in what students wrote and how they used their journals, for example, some ended up writing drafts of essays, together with questions about them in their journals.

A note on my role

My prime role through the data-collection process was that of lecturer/educator, with the intention of helping the students through the course and enabling them in their current and future studies through the development of skills that enabled their academic literacy. I was consciously involved in helping them to find useful means of constructing meaning, managing this knowledge and communicating about it within the academic environment. Doring (2002) suggests that, particularly in dialogue with students, academics act as agents of change through the process of students' transformations. I served as a mediating identity, where, for example, I modelled in terms of discourse. While I was steeped in this process, I did not deal with the collected data as a researcher. My role as researcher was taken on after the data had been collected. The researcher role is a more distancing one and became possible at the stage where I was no longer working with the students.

My theoretical scaffolding

My approach is underpinned by a social constructivist epistemology. I view reality, and therefore ideas of self and identity, as being socially constructed. Murray (1995:n.p.) explains the constructionist stance of narrative psychology, in which selfhood is investigated 'as the product of public discourse rather than internal psychic processes', and he refers to identity as being 'as a construction rather than a representation of what already exists'. In other words, the self becomes known due to the linguistic and dialogic articulations of the individual's intentions, rather than the probing of their inner psyche.

Bakhtin spoke of 'authoring the self' – the meaning we construct of ourselves (Holland et al., 2003). He speaks of the notion of self-hood being grounded in dialogical notions; Lensmire (1998) explains that Bakhtin is saying that 'to be is to communicate. ... And to communicate is to struggle to speak and write in ways that somehow answer to the

unique demands of unique situations that have never occurred before. In other words, Bakhtin saw demands for becoming in our everyday existence, saw struggle and creativity as facts of life' (Lensmire, 1998:286). Sfard and Prusak claim that their view of identity as being a collection of 'reifying, significant, endorsable stories about a person', enables them to present identities as '*discursive counterparts* of one's lived experiences' rather than 'as entities residing in the world itself' (2005:17). For this reason, language is an essential element; it constitutes and constructs identity – and lived reality to a large extent; As Parker points out, 'Language plays a powerful role in reproducing and transforming power relations along many different dimensions (class, culture, gender, sexuality, disability, age, etc.)' (1992:123).

Our constructions of self and identity are built, maintained and affected by what we tell ourselves and others, and by the way in which we do so; our stories or narratives about ourselves, and how we structure them. Thus identity is shaped by and inseparable from discourse.

The social nature of identity and discourse underlies the importance of the social dimension of learning. Allie et al. (2007) point out that within a participatory perspective, attention to context or background is important; 'it is not possible to discuss learning as participation without explicit consideration of the educational context in which the learning takes place, the background of the student, and the real world context in which the successful learner will need to function' (Allie et al., 2007:6). I provide a detailed description of what the students have written about their background and educational contexts in Chapter 5.

My use of journals as a pedagogic strategy also falls within a constructivist philosophy – in that I see them as facilitating students' construction of meaning with their texts, their self expression and exploration and their emerging agency in their learning and their writing.

Background: Description of the course

The course grew out of an informal intervention which I had offered the Education Department, whilst working as a consultant in the University's Writing Centre, when a number of students from this particular degree, the postgraduate Bachelor in Education, had approached the Writing Centre and it became evident that there were many common difficulties. The course later became a formal accredited, two-semester course, compulsory for students without a previous degree, and taught by myself and a colleague, Abongwe Bangeni (who uses the name Bongi in informal circumstances). It consisted of weekly 90 minute sessions and the class size was between 35 and 45.

The objectives of the course were to develop students' conceptual engagement with disciplinary content and to introduce students to the concept of a reading, writing and learning community. This entailed the promotion of critical thinking, reflection and self-awareness in students as academic writers, with the aim of enabling them to read and analyse academic texts and to write academic essays, and thus, to understand and carry out assignment instructions such as 'debate', 'critically discuss', 'argue', to be able to position themselves in relation to the subject of the essay and to other authorities, and to understand referencing and use the appropriate styles and mechanisms for it. Students were also introduced to the basics of research.

The sessions were divided into formal lectures and tutorial discussions each week. The lectures focused mainly on academic discussions around the consistency, practice and teaching of specific academic literacy skills. These were backed by readings, some of which were theoretical, for example, around the issue of multilingualism, and some were practical, for example, on tips on the writing process. (Lists of lecture topics covered and readings provided to students are given in Appendices 2 and 3.) Our tutorials aimed at encouraging students to reflect on the readings and their own experiences, both as students and as educators, and to clarify, through discussion, any areas in which they were confused. Students were required to do extensive writing practise throughout the course, in the form of journal entries, drafts, assignments and reflective pieces.

During the first semester students prepared for submission of a formal essay around an issue related to academic literacy. This was to be based on their course readings and their own experiences and observations as students or as teachers. During the second semester they wrote a literature review around a topic of their choice. Whilst they were expected to find their own readings, they were given opportunities to discuss their literature research process and topics in class and through their journal writings. They were also offered guidance through one-on-one consultations with either Bongi or myself. During the writing process, students were encouraged to consult us with drafts of their first assignment and were required to read and give feedback on each other's drafts of their Literature Reviews.

Each week, students were required to write a journal entry to a respondent in the class from whom they were expected to receive a response and then to hand in their entries to Bongi and myself, to which one of us would also write a response. We expected their entries to consist of reflections on their readings, the lectures and their development of their academic literacy skills. During the first semester, a weekly journal prompt was given in the course outline; usually a question relating to the reading(s) for that week and to the teaching topic of the fortnight. A list of these prompts is given in Appendix 4. In the second semester, they were expected to become more independent in their regular reflections and rather than responding to given prompts from us, to reflect on their own progress in the course and their assignments and to reflect on the readings they had chosen in preparation for their course assignments. We tried to draw on students' own experiences relating to the topics, both in our prompts for and our responses to their journal entries.

Journals were aimed at getting students practiced and confident in writing, both about their own academic literacy experiences and their own ideas and reflections on the course topics and to contribute towards their training in critical thinking. In addition, we wanted to promote the idea that writing is a social process; that they write for a live and potentially engaging reader, and to get them feeling at ease in sharing their reflections and ideas with others. We also hoped to provide the space for them to raise questions and

problems they had around their learning. As Scott et al. (2002) claim, writing helps us with controlling what we learn.

Students were asked to submit a portfolio at the end of the course, consisting of their journal entries together with responses from their journal partners, some examples of drafts and final assignments for any of their courses, together with brief reflections on these, and two formal reflective pieces relating to their academic literacy development at the end of each semester. As part of the second reflective essay, they were asked to refer to their process and performance in three essays they had written for their other courses over the year. The idea behind the portfolios was to keep a record of their own development for reflective purposes. In terms of assessment, detailed marking structures were given for each of the formal assignments. With regards to the portfolio marks, journals were given a mark based on the number of regular entries with partner responses, and the depth of insight and quality of the entries (admittedly, not easy criteria to measure). The reflective pieces were marked (generously) along the same lines.

I believe that the course, in fact, served as a transitional space for the students. In other words, one in which they were able to consciously migrate from old practices and approaches and senses of self to new ones, such as, from viewing learning as the act of consuming knowledge to viewing it as producing knowledge, and seeing themselves as learners as consumers to other producers of knowledge. However, this process meant expecting, encouraging and attempting to enable a number of fairly swift shifts, over the one year duration. For students these were shifts in their means of relating to other voices, in their debates, their readings and their writings within the environment, shifts from informal writing genres to formal writing, and from everyday and professional discourses to academic ones and often, from dependence to independence in their learning strategies. In general, it meant attempting to promote confidence amongst students within their academic social environment and this involved recognition (by ourselves and students) of the linking of their own experiences and selves to and within the theories and texts they were required to engage with.

An overview of changes in student enrolments at the institution under study, between 1994 and 2011

Appendix 8 contains some data that I have tabulated, drawn from statistics on the student intake, provided by the Institutional Information Unit at the university at which this study was conducted. I present a brief summary of these below. I chose to focus on the intakes of five years through the period since Democracy. I also focused in particular on the Humanities faculty, as this is where the students in this study were based. A full analysis of these statistics is beyond the scope of this thesis; they are presented here, merely as background information.

Table 1: Total percentage head count of student enrolments by population group⁶

	1994	1999	2002	2007	2011	% Change
Black South African % of total student population	18%	27%	27%	18%	22%	+4
Coloured % of total student population	13%	14%	14%	13%	14%	+1
South African Indian % of total student population	4%	7%	7%	7%	7%	+3
White % of total student population	55%	52%	51%	40%	36%	-11
International % of total student population	10%			19%	18%	+8

Percentage of undergraduate student enrolments by population group						
	1994	1999	2002	2007	2011	% Change
Black South African % of total undergraduate student population	22%	30%	28%	21%	26%	+4
Coloured % of total undergraduate student population	14%	14%	15%	14%	15%	+1
South African Indian % of total undergraduate student population	4%	8%	7%	7%	7%	+3
White % of total undergraduate student population	51%	49%	50%	38%	33%	-18
International % of total undergraduate student population	8%			18%	16%	+8
Percentage of postgraduate student enrolments by population group						
	1994	1999	2002	2007	2011	% Change
Black South African % of total postgraduate student population	9%	22%	25%	12%	14%	+5
Coloured % of total postgraduate student population	8%	13%	14%	12%	13%	+5
South African Indian % of total postgraduate student population	4%	6%	6%	6%	6%	+2
White % of total postgraduate student population	67%	59%	55%	44%	40%	-27
International % of total postgraduate student population	11%			22%	23%	+12

⁶ Empty blocks indicate a lack of availability of data.

Table 2: Percentage of population cohort studying in the Humanities disciplines

	1994	1999	2002	2007	2011	% Change
Black South African	51%	31%	27%	13%	18%	-33
Coloured	43%	17%	18%	16%	19%	-24
South African Indian	23%	4%	3%	3%	3%	-20
White	31%	48%	52%	41%	36%	+4
International	30%			25%	21%	-9

Percentage of undergraduate population cohort studying in the Humanities disciplines						
	1994	1999	2002	2007	2011	% Change
Black South African	52%	32%	26%	14%	20%	-32
Coloured	45%	18%	18%	17%	20%	-25
South African Indian	23%	4%	4%	3%	3%	-20
White	33%	46%	52%	39%	33%	0
International	37%			25%	21%	-16

Percentage of postgraduate population cohort studying in the Humanities disciplines						
	1994	1999	2002	2007	2011	% Change
Black South African	51%	29%	28%	11%	12%	-39
Coloured	44%	15%	17%	11%	12%	-32
South African Indian	26%	3%	3%	3%	3%	-23
White	24%	54%	51%	47%	45%	+21
International	28%			24%	23%	-5

The statistics here differ from the national picture, as this institution is a historically white university, incorporating research, as well as teaching into its institutional agenda, and therefore considered elite. For example, whilst in 2007, the institutional student population composed of 18% black, 13% coloured, 7% Indian, and 40% white, data from 2004 calculate national participation rates in higher education institutions as follows: 61% black, 6% coloured, 6% Indian, and 25% white (Breier & Mabizela, 2008; Leibowitz, 2012b). Furthermore, neither of these sets of percentages are in proportion to the national population breakdown: the 61% of the black students at higher educational institutions nationally, was actually a mere 12% of the total black South African population, and the 6% of the coloured students was only 12% of the total coloured population, whilst the 6% of the Indian students was 51% of the total Indian population and the 25% of the white students was 60% of the total white population (Breier & Mabizela, 2008; Leibowitz, 2012b). What follows is a summary of the statistics of the institution at which this study took place.

With most of the statistics presented in these tables, there was a radical change between 1994 and 1999. These peaks or dips seemed to taper down from 2002. This is possibly due to what I would refer to as ‘the honeymoon period’, followed by the aftermath of reality, when, I posture, after democracy, access became apparently accessible and opportunities were taken; but as differences in cultural capital and discrepancies with old standards became apparent, access and chances of success at this ‘elite’ institution, became evidently not-so-accessible. However, it is also interesting to note that as access widened, there was generally a drop in the percentage of students from the respective population cohorts entering Humanities disciplines, except for the white population cohort, where there was an increase.

It is notable that the percentage of black South African students in the total student population has only risen by 4%, between 1994, where they comprised 18% of the total student population, and 2011, where 22% of the total student population was black South Africans. This percentage peaked in 1999, and then declined. However, the percentage of the black South African student population in Humanities dropped by 33% in this period. It is highly likely that this was due to there being more access to other faculties. Generally the percentage of black South African students in the total undergraduate student population has only risen by 4%. However, in 1994, 52% of the undergraduate black South African population was in the Humanities faculty, whilst in 2011, only 20% of the undergraduate black South African population was in the Humanities faculty; indicating a decrease of 32%. There is a similar picture in the black South African postgraduate student population, having risen generally by 5%, and having changed from 51% of the postgraduate black South African population being in the Humanities faculty in 1994, to 14% in 2011; indicating a decrease of 39%.

It is interesting that, despite their having had access to former Model C schools, the percentage of coloured South African students⁷ in the total student population has only risen by 1%, between 1994, where they comprised 13% of the total student population, and 2011, where 14% of the total student population were coloured South Africans.

⁷ In the Western Cape Province of South Africa, there is a large population of so-called ‘coloured’ people.

However, the percentage of the coloured student population in Humanities dropped by 24% in this period. Again, it is likely that this was due to there being more access to other faculties. This trend is echoed in the undergraduate population, where generally the percentage of coloured students in the total undergraduate student population has remained the same since 1994. However, in 1994, 45% of the undergraduate coloured population was in the Humanities faculty, whilst in 2011, this had dropped by 25%. Generally the percentage of coloured students in the total postgraduate student population has risen by 5%. In a similar trend to the undergraduate case, in 1994, 44% of the postgraduate coloured population was in the Humanities faculty, whilst in 2011, only 12% of the postgraduate coloured population was in the Humanities faculty; indicating a decrease of 32%. The small percentage of coloured students could be accounted for in that there is another university in the town which catered for the coloured community historically.

The percentage of South African Indian students in the total student population has only risen by 3%, since 1994. However, the percentage of the South African Indian student population in Humanities disciplines dropped by 20% in this period. Thus currently, only 3% of the Indian population at the university is in the Humanities faculty. The pictures for both undergraduate and postgraduates in this group echo the general trend; with a very slight rise in the total general population in both cases, and a drop of 20% of their undergraduates and 23% of their postgraduates attending the Humanities faculty.

The percentage of white South African students in the total student population has dropped by 19%, between 1994, where they comprised 55% of the total student population, and 2011, where 36% of the total student population is white South Africans. Contrary to other population groups, the percentage of the white South African student population in Humanities has risen by 5% in this period. It is interesting that it rose to 52% in 2002. In other words, just over half of the white students at the university were in the Humanities faculty. In terms of degree levels, generally the percentage of white students has dropped by 18% in the total undergraduate student population and 27% in the total postgraduate student population. Unlike the trend in other population groups, the

percentage of the undergraduate white population in the Faculty of Humanities was the same in 2011 as it was in 1994. However, the percentage of the white postgraduate population in the Humanities disciplines has risen from 24% in 1994, to 45% in 2011; indicating an increase of 21%.

The percentage of international students in the total student population has risen by 8%. The percentage of the international student population who are in Humanities has dropped by 9%.

The percentage of males in the total student population declined steadily, by 10%, between 1994 and 2011. Thus, in 2011, slightly less than half the student population was male. There has been an 11% decrease in the percentage of males in the undergraduate student population. The proportion of the male population who were in Humanities had remained at just under a third. In 1994, 63% of the postgraduate population was male; by 2011 this amount had dropped to 51%. In 1994, only 20% of the male postgraduate population studied in the Humanities disciplines; this had risen to 32% by 2011.

In 1994, female students comprised 42% of the total student population. This amount increased to 52% in 2011. Just over two thirds of the female student population was in the Humanities in 2011. It is interesting to note that there was a radical increase between 1994 and 1999. The percentage of undergraduate females increased from 43% in 1994 to just over half, 54% in 2011. More than two thirds of the female undergraduates were in the Humanities in 2011; indicating an increase of 18%. The percentage of females in the total postgraduate population had increased by 12%, reaching just under half in 2011. More than two thirds of the female undergraduates were in the Humanities in 2011; indicating an increase of 14%.

60% of the student population is in undergraduate diplomas or degrees, just under half of whom are in Humanities. About a fifth of the Master's student population is in Humanities disciplines. This is the same for PhD's.

Structure of this thesis

Chapter 2 provides a theoretical framework for the study. This covers literature around access to higher education, and related issues around learning, language, literacy and identity and agency in writing, as well as discourse studies and narrative inquiry.

Chapter 3 provides justification for the dialogical journaling exercise and presents insights into the experience of the exercise from students during the course, and myself.

Chapter 4 outlines the methodology I have used in my research in terms of analysing my data, and briefly discusses the scope and limitations of my study.

The analysis section of my study is presented in two layers: as a global narrative, in Chapter 5, which describes the learning experiences of these students, and a detailed analysis, covering students' discourse styles and developing understandings of referencing conventions (or other voices), in Chapter 6, and their developments in terms of reflective functioning, dialogue and taking on of agency through their migrating identities, in Chapter 7.

Chapter 8 discusses the findings in conclusion of my study.

Chapter 2

Theoretical Framework

Many researchers have written of the alienating features of the academic culture to new students, especially to those unfamiliar with its practices and values and for whom these practices and values differ significantly from those they have known previously during their school experiences or subsequent working lives (Scanlon et al., 2007; Ecclestone et al., 2005; Read et al., 2001, 2003; Angelil-Carter, 2000; Ivanič, 1998). Such features of the academic culture, especially in the Arts and Social Sciences, include new or different ideas about knowledge and how to relate about ideas – both in speaking and writing – and how to engage with terms such as ‘truth’, ‘argument’, ‘critical thinking’, ‘knowledge’, and ‘evidence’. What is more, these practices and values are not often explained – students are expected to simply fit in. Read et al. point out that, even in the institution itself, “‘conventions’ are rarely explicitly examined, leaving students scrambling in the dark for an understanding of the ‘rules of the game’ they have found themselves playing’ (2001:388).

Although globally there is now a wide diversity in the backgrounds of university students, Read et al. found that ‘academic culture predominantly reflects the dominant discourse of the student learner as white, middle-class and male’ (2003:261). To this I would add: young adult, independent of financial or familial responsibilities. University advertisements and general orientation programmes and social functions aimed at such types, render other types of students (‘mature’, speakers of English as a second language, for example) ‘non-traditional’. Such a labelling, or position, impacts on these students’ perceptions of themselves, of themselves in the institution and of themselves as learners. They promote in the ‘non-traditional’ student a sense of self as intruder in the new institution’s space. Scanlon et al. (2007) relate difficulties reported in research on the transition to university for students that result in a lack of connectedness and involvement, unhappiness and dissatisfaction, loneliness, isolation, disequilibrium and alienation. Ivanič relates various studies that establish that ‘entering higher education as a mature student is associated with change, difficulty, crises of confidence, conflicts of identity, feelings of strangeness, the need to discover the rules of an unfamiliar world’ (1998:7).

Ecclestone et al. (2005) refer to transitions, such as those of moving from school to university, as involving negotiations and renegotiations of new and old identities. Scanlon et

al. (2007) explain that such a change of contexts involves some sense of loss which then compels the shaping of a new situated identity. Similarly, Northedge (2003a) explains that academic novices need to develop new identities as members of the academic institution, which entails coming to use its discourse.

Ecclestone et al. (2005) identify four concepts that are important to consider in studying the process and outcomes of transitions; those of decision-making (which affect why the transition occurred and how it occurs), identity (what happens to the sense of self throughout the transition), agency (or the 'power' adopted or perceived by the self through the transition) and structure (how the transition is managed or framed). All of these relate to my investigation of students' experiences and their writing.

My study focusses on what is involved in the renegotiations of new and old identities during the transitions of mature students coming to this institution of higher education, with particular attention to their senses of self within their literacy practices. My research is embedded in the theoretical framework of New Literacy Studies (NLS), which takes a sociocultural or ethnographic approach, based on the premise that knowledge and meaning are socially constructed. In other words, literacy is always situated in a context; the social groups to which individuals belong have specific ways of reading and writing, and often speaking. As a result, writing can be seen as consisting of three dimensions: the written text, the social interaction surrounding the production of the text, and the socio-cultural context within which the social interaction takes place (Fairclough, 1992). Also important here is the recognition that even context is regarded as active; it is 'seen as a process, constructed by participants through interaction' (Kalman, in Ivanič & Weldon, 1999:34).

Important aspects of the theory of learning within the Academic literacies model in NLS are those of 'power, identity, and agency in the role of language in the learning process' (Brice-Heath & Street, 2008:106). The issue of voice (a representation of the writer as author in the text; this concept is also socially constructed) itself is a critical component of power here, as voice in academic literacy can both empower and inhibit the learner writer. Furthermore, this voice, in its articulation, has to take on particular characteristics – different from those of social or professional discourses. 'Voice' in writing (or other academic communications) is contingent upon a sense of self or identity. In fact, identity in academic writing is often spoken of as 'voice'. Identity can also be regarded as being socially constructed or situated:

an individual's identity is seen according to their 'fitting in' with a group; their level of belonging, both perceived by others in the group and perceived and felt by the individual. Identity is also attached to role, and one's role differs according to the social situation one is in (for example, mother, student, or teacher). In other words, identity is contextually determined and constructed in relation to others. In this context, identity depends intimately on language; it is essentially a means of communicating or describing oneself, albeit in relation to others. Both power and identity are manifest in the concept of agency, referring to the action of the agent – the source or do-er of the activities happening in the process. All of these aspects are implicit in social relationships and thus demand consideration of context.

Taking into account the context of the students in my class and the analytical frameworks I make use of in my study, this chapter maps relevant literature around literacy studies, academic learning, discourse and writing, and the relationships between issues of identity, agency and voice in learning and in academic writing. I also include a discussion on narrative theory relating to identity, or sense of self, as much of my interest is based on what students say about their selves in their writing.

A social approach to literacy

The NLS movement (which began in the early 1990s) brought about a shift in the way literacy was regarded. As Street (2009) explains, dominant perspectives on literacy treat it as 'autonomous' of social context and comprising of a (universal) set of technical skills that simply need to be learnt. Ivanič distinguishes 'between those who treat academic literacy as a fixed set of practices to which students need to be initiated, and those who take a more critical view, recognizing that such practices are socially constructed and consequently open to contestation and change' (1998:76). The 'social literacies' approach, which evolved from the NLS perspective, 'assumes reading and writing to be social practices that vary with context and use' (Street, 2009:21). He continues,

The ways in which teachers or facilitators and their students interact is already a social practice that affects the nature of the literacy learned and the ideas about literacy held by the participants, especially new learners and their positions in relations of power. It is not valid to suggest that literacy can be 'given' neutrally and then its social effects only experienced or added on afterwards. (Street, 2009:23)

Baynham claims that understanding writing as situated social practice means considering 'the subjectivity of the writer, the writing process, the purpose and audience of the text, the text as product, the power of the written genre in which the text is an exemplar and the source or

legitimacy of that power' (1995:209). Baynham also states that this (NLS) perspective emphasizes

Literacy as social practice, involving both what people do with literacy and the subjective dimension of what they make of what they do: the values they place on it and the ideologies that surround it. This approach to literacy emphasizes the interaction of text and practice as well as the situated nature of literacy practices and thus the crucial role of context in understanding literacy in use. (Baynham, 2000:99)

So this perspective considers the uses and meanings brought by participants, as well as the contexts of the literacy practices. The contexts that literacies are situated in are the social and cultural practices, which include historical, political and economic considerations (Gee, 2000b).

Two important concepts in NLS are 'literacy events', which refer to instances where interactions between participants and their understandings centre around a written text, and 'literacy practices', which refer to activities around texts (Kell, 2009). Maybin claims, 'The notion of 'literacy events' highlights the mediation of texts through dialogue and social interaction, in the context of particular practices and settings' (2000:197). The notion of *literacy practices*, according to Barton and Hamilton, 'offers a powerful way of conceptualizing the link between the activities of reading and writing and the social structures in which they are embedded and which they help shape' (2000:7). They continue to explain that the use and distribution of texts are regulated by social rules which shape the literacy practices, for example determining who is allowed to produce them and have access to them. Gee (2000b) points out that language, too, needs to be understood in context. Furthermore, 'situations (contexts) do not just exist. Situations are rarely static or uniform, they are actively created, sustained, negotiated, resisted, and transformed moment-by-moment through ongoing *work*' (Gee's emphasis) (Gee, 2000b:190-191).

NLS was one of a number of movements that arose at a similar time, which argued for the importance of the 'social', rather than a focus on individual behaviour. Gee (2000b) refers to a 'social turn' which occurred across a number of disciplines. He lists a number of such movements, to which I refer: discursive psychology (Potter; Harré), sociohistorical psychology (Bakhtin), situated cognition (Lave & Wenger), narrative studies, sociology (Giddens) and post-structuralist work (Fairclough).

Discourses

A new institution entails a new culture into which students must become initiated in order to belong. This culture has a specific Discourse which is practised within it. 'Discourse' in this sense, as opposed to that of language-in-use, (Gee distinguishes it from the normal understanding of language-in-use, through a capital 'D'), is more than simply a type of spoken language; 'People build identities and activities not just through language but by using language together with other 'stuff' that isn't language' (Gee, 2005:21), for example, behaviour, dress, values, ways of thinking and the appropriate use of symbols, tools and objects. He refers to discourses as 'kits' (Gee, 2007). Thesen talks of discourse being about 'constraints, codes, and restrictions on language in institutional settings' (1997:494). This conception of discourse being about language *and* practice merges the distinction between what one says and what one does (Hall, 2001). Taylor (2001) refers to discourses as socially constructed knowledges of reality which give expression to the meanings and values of an institution or social grouping. As Gee (1989; 2007) points out, Discourses are not learnt or taught, but are acquired through social interactions and experiences. There are primary discourses, acquired early on within the sociocultural setting of family, and secondary ones, learnt as part of socialization within local, state and national groups. Discourses serve many functions; amongst others, Parker (1992) includes the facts that discourses support institutions, they reproduce power relations and they have ideological effects. They serve to indicate a belonging or not to groupings – hierarchizing members and non-members and affecting belief and value systems. So, institutions can be reinforced with use of a particular discourse. Fairclough explains, 'Discourse is socially constructive, constituting social subjects, social relations, and systems of knowledge and belief, and the study of discourse focuses upon its constructive ideological effects' (1998:36).

Fairclough (1998; 1992) explains that discourse serves as a constructive and transformative mechanism. He talks about three functions of discourse: an identity function – how social identities are set up in discourse, a relational function – 'how social relationships between discourse participants are enacted and negotiated' (1998:36), and an ideational function – 'ways in which texts signify the world and its processes, entities and relations' (ibid). In other words, discourse contributes to the construction of 'social identities' and subject positions, it helps construct social relationships between people and it contributes to the construction of systems of knowledge, belief and meaning. Halliday's (1996) 'functions of language' follow a similar vein, viz: the 'ideational', whereby ideas or content are conveyed, the

‘interpersonal’, in terms of the effect the speaker/writer has on the listener/reader, and the ‘textual’, referring to how the meaning is made. Wortham’s (2001:67) discussion of narrative analysis, which I will discuss shortly, offers a similar explanation; he explains that narrative language contains three layers: it refers to and characterizes narrated objects, it indexes the voices of the characters represented, and it establishes a social position for the narrator themselves.

Northedge explains learning as being the process of acquiring the capacity ‘to participate in the discourses of an unfamiliar, knowledge community’ (2003a:17), and he regards teaching as supporting that participation. It is within this participation that knowledge is constructed. He speaks of knowledge, not as information, but as being ‘constituted in the flow of meaning’ produced as participating members communicate with each other. Thus, he says, students will not simply gain knowledge from reading a book or listening to a lecture, but from participating in the particular (academic) discourse community. He adds that, in order to participate in that community, these students need both an understanding of, and a voice within, the community, which requires a sense of their own identity within that discourse community.

Relying on oversimplification for clarity of distinction, Northedge (2003a) explains the nature of discourse in everyday, professional and academic discourse communities in general. He speaks of the mode of everyday discourses as a tribal one, functioning to maintain the social order of daily living. It assumes a common understanding and acceptance of what is uttered. Views presented are one-sided and personal and he refers to the character of the discourse as ‘ideological, coercive and opportunistic’. Professional discourses have a more functional mode that works to maintain the workings of the machinery of the profession – keeping systems going and enabling delivery of its services. Views are impersonal and official, and Northedge describes the character as constrained, hierarchical and pragmatic. The mode of academic discourse is rational and analytical, with a theory building function. It separates out ideas from the speaker’s personal contexts. Views presented in academia are multifaceted and objective and the character of the discourse is one of careful structure and analysis. Northedge describes the voice of everyday discourses as ‘urgent, personal, emotive and tribal’, of professional discourses as ‘brisk, assertive, businesslike and institutional’, and of academic discourses as ‘unhurried, speculative, analytical and uncommitted’ (Northedge, 2003a:25-26). Questioning or debate in response to these various voices is also perceived in

different ways; debate or argument in everyday discourses entails a crisis of authority – in the non-acceptance of the prevailing view. In professional discourses, debate is allowed under certain controlled conditions and questioning is usually only accepted for clarification purposes (with the intention of keeping in order). However, debate is considered a natural and important element of academic discourses, where nothing is taken for granted, and everything is questionable – critique is essential.

Northedge's (2003a) distinctive characteristics, albeit overriding the ways in which one arena bleeds into another, provide a useful starting point in considering the practices – social and literate – of the contexts and communities that the students in my study principally identify with. They are likely to be well established in two of Northedge's discourse areas already. However, it is unlikely that they have been part of an academic discourse community in the past. Most of them are educators, based in schools, but I consider these as professional discourse environments, where the *business* of education is carried out, rather than academic discourse environments, where they are involved in the pursuit of knowledge making amongst themselves. Few, for example, have made use of libraries or had to write a discursive essay before.

Communication through writing is a large factor in the practices of this institutional discourse community.

Academic writing

A major aspect of the academic transition involves having to communicate ideas one has come across and one's own ideas and constructions of meaning in writing¹. Writing is very much a social practice of the higher educational institution. In their manual for student writers, Scott et al. (2002) refer to writing as a means of ordering one's experience and making connections with one's world, and they emphasize that, whatever the result, the act of writing is always a communication (with oneself, if not others) and therefore, never insignificant. They explain that writing helps us with learning and with *controlling* what we learn. However, Scott et al. (2002) propose that unpractised writers often believe that the only purpose of writing is to express what they (the writer) already know or think, and that their writing informs (only) the reader of what the writer has learnt or thinks, before putting pen to

¹ I acknowledge that different disciplines within the academic institution require different types of writing (for example, requirements in academic essays in chemistry, economics and sociology differ), and consist of different discursive communities. However, here, I am speaking generally for the academic discourse community.

paper. In other words, often unpractised writers do not see writing as being of any use for the writer, nor do they see the practise of writing in terms of creating any new understanding, or that meaning is made in the process of writing. In fact, as Scott et al. state, ‘one reason that writing is difficult is that it is not actually a single activity at all but a process consisting of several activities that can overlap, with two or more sometimes operating simultaneously (e.g. *Planning, defining audience, thinking about purpose, revising, you are questioning, brainstorming, organising, outlining, revisiting*) as you labour to organise and phrase your thoughts’ (2002:13). Based on my observations and discussions with the students I taught, I think that few of them seemed to see this initially. Writing is not an activity they have practised much in this regard. I think that this ‘ordering of their experience’ that Scott et al. (2002) refer to, was often done semi-consciously in essays by students in this study, in a second or third language, as well as a new discourse, under scrutiny or judgement of the marker-lecturer (and therefore, apparently, actually ordering experiences for someone else). Thus, it was as if their self (and experience) had no connection with what they wrote.

Thompson and Pennycook point out another reason why writing in an academic context may be difficult: they state that it ‘requires every producer and reader to participate in a much broader struggle about authority, the politics of knowledge and the nature of authorship, and to confront questions about whose language, ideas and knowledge count and why’ (2008:22). Furthermore, as Lillis explains, there is a need to be explicit in academic writing, and this ‘involves learning how to construct meanings through a range of interrelated conventions, resulting from the particular socio-discursive context of higher education’ (1999:131). She refers to Gee (1990; 1996) who outlines what he and others (cf. Brice-Heath, Street, Baynham, Lillis) in the NLS movement refer to as ‘essayist writing’ as being ‘linear, values a particular type of explicitness, has one central point – theme, character, event – at any one time, and is in Standard (American) English’ (ibid), and it aims to inform rather than entertain. Thus, apart from the specific techniques of academic writing, it also has social, psychological and historical dimensions that students need to be aware of.

Lea (1998) argues that we need to take cognizance of the role that academic literacy practices play in constituting knowledge in institutions of higher education. She explains that ‘practices of academic literacy are central processes through which students learn new subjects and develop their knowledge about new areas of study’ (1998:159). She continues to explain that, rather than simply given by texts, meanings are created through a particular set of literacy practices. This supports the point made by Reinertsen and Wells that ‘writing is a natural

vehicle for exploring ideas, taking them apart, and then reforming them – the essence of thinking. By its nature, it leaves evidence of thought that can be reviewed and pondered. Writers often do not know what they know until they have written it, reread it, and clarified it further for themselves’ (1993:np). This idea of writing being a means of ordering thoughts and ideas is supported by others, such as Law (1994), Fulwiler (2002), as well as Scott et al. (2002).

Academic writing entails the construction of well-reasoned and supported ‘arguments’. The concept of an argument implies a social exchange or interaction, in this case, between the writer/performer and the reader/audience. Ivanič and Weldon talk of writing as a social interaction – where writers, apart from constructing an ideational message, also construct a message about themselves, and ‘anticipate the response of their readers’ values, beliefs and relative social power’ (1999:170).

A further complexity in the writing process is that writing is not a two dimensional process of thoughts to paper or readings to writing – but has to become multidimensional – in which the writer fulfils many roles, for example, as one doing the act of writing, relating their own ideas in writing, relating their own ideas to a reader(s), relating others’ ideas in writing, relating others’ ideas to reader(s), relating to and reflecting on their own and others’ ideas. This is in addition to doing these to the reader(s): relating others’ ideas to each other, their self and their reader(s), relating others’ ideas to new ideas, new contexts – and more. Bakhtin (1981) speaks of the power of the novel that is held through the co-existences and conflicts of the different utterances of the characters, the narrators and the author. Wortham writes that ‘Any autobiographical narrative involves a doubling of roles for the narrator’s self – the narrator has at least one role in the represented content of the story and one role in the on-going interaction between narrator and audience’ (2001:13). This could also apply to academic writing; the writer is representing views of others and keeping a discussion of their own going with the reader. In other words, there is (at least) a doubling of roles in writing – what could be regarded as a ‘pure’ or core self – *what I think* (although it might sound or be less confident than the other), and as a self behind *how I will tell you* – to persuade you to think like me, think I’m right, see what others ‘say’.

Identity, agency and voice in learning

I now discuss theory around each of the concepts of identity, agency and voice specifically as they are spoken of in learning.

Identity in learning

All learning entails forms of transitions, moving from one state of knowing to a new one and in the process – changing senses of selves. Lave and Wenger (in Wojecki, 2005) state that learning ‘implies becoming a different person [and] involves the construction of identity’. Biesta et al. state, ‘identity is embodied, not just cognitive, and partly tacit. If and when identity changes, learning is an inherent part of that change process’ (2008:np). The sense of self or identity determines the quality or essence of learning. From their research, Biesta et al. (2008) found that learners’ sense of self (the dispositions they have towards themselves, their lives and learning) and their social positions can both enable and constrain learning (I discuss positioning theory shortly). Their research involved looking at life stories narrated by adult learners. They claimed that ‘the narration of one’s life story is not only an important vehicle for expressing one’s sense of self, but also for articulating and actively constructing such a sense of self. Relationships between identity and learning often become clear at times of crisis and change’ (Biesta et al., 2008:np). My initial inkling was that the dialogical journal writing served a similar purpose for students in the process of constructing their sense of self.

Mezirow (1990) defines learning as ‘the process of making a new or revised interpretation of the meaning of an experience, which guides subsequent understanding, appreciation, and action’ (1990:1), and this relates to narrative theory in its notion that meaning is constructed and changes through the telling and retelling of stories. Mezirow continues: ‘What we perceive and fail to perceive and what we think and fail to think are powerfully influenced by habits of expectation that constitute our frame of reference, that is, a set of assumptions that structure the way we interpret our experiences’ (ibid). In other words, our old habits and experience of learning affect our expectations as well as our interpretations of our new experiences – the simple fact or process of learning can be affected by whether or not it is expected². Thus one could argue that the different ideas or perceptions or expectations that students have of what the institution is and what it gives and gets from students affect their outcomes (what they get out of the institution). Early experiences and expectations of the learning environment on the part of students affect how learning happens and what is regarded by them as learning (and affect their subsequent teaching practices – in the context of the students’ teacher training experience).

² I am not denying that learning can happen without it being expected!

Learning is defined by Northedge as being the process of acquiring the capacity ‘to participate in the discourses of an unfamiliar, knowledge community’ (Northedge, 2003a:17)³. It is within this participation that knowledge is constructed. Northedge speaks of knowledge, not as information, but as being ‘constituted in the flow of meaning’ produced as participating members communicate with each other. Thus, he says, students will not simply gain knowledge from reading a book or listening to a lecture, but from participating in the particular (academic) discourse community. In order to participate in that community, he continues, these students need both an understanding of and a voice within the community – which requires a sense of their own identity within that discourse community.

Leibowitz (2012), drawing on other theorists of learning, suggests that successful learning is enhanced by the learner feeling that they are an insider and part of the learning community. Lave and Wenger (1991) speak of learning as emerging out of a participation in communities of practice. This theory developed through their exploration of processes of reconstructing social identities. It is critical to bear this in mind when understanding the impact of transitions for adult learners. It is also important to consider the role that context and situation play in identity construction – for example, mature or part-time students are often in in-between contexts; being workers, or having other off-campus commitments affects their identity as university students. For many such students, the transition can have a tender impact on their social and professional identities – depending on whether their social relationships are supportive of learning or whether they as students are revered or envied (for example, by work colleagues). The transition from non-participant to participant can be made harder due to work demands, family demands and geographical distance – for example, such students may find it difficult to get to the library as their time is constrained due to work and family demands.

Norton writes:

Researchers of language and identity have become interested not only in the conditions under which language learners speak, but in the extent to which identities and investments structure their engagement with *texts*, whether these be written, oral or multimodal. There is growing recognition that when a learner engages in textual practices, both the comprehension and construction of the text is mediated by the learner’s investment in the activity and the learner’s identity. (2010b:358)

Too often, ‘identity’ seems to be spoken about in fixed or finite terms – a product from searching through confusion – rather than a communicative tool used in different ways in

³ He regards teaching as supporting that participation.

different contexts at different times. The flux of both the context (including temporal factors) and the use of this communicative or relational tool is not always acknowledged. Ecclestone et al. state, 'Broadly, identity can be defined as the ways in which the self is represented and understood in dynamic, multidimensional and evolving ways' (2005:10). As mentioned in my introduction to this chapter, they refer to transitions as involving negotiations and renegotiations of new and old identities. In this sense, identity is contextually determined and constructed in relation to others; how we are seen by others and how we are distinguished from others. Thus it is socially constructed or socially situated: an individual's identity is determined by or seen according to their 'fitting in' with a group – or their level of belonging, both perceived and felt. Norton (2006) refers to identity as a 'sociocultural construct'. Currie (1998) points out that, rather than being something present within us, identity is, in fact, constituted by difference. Kraus claims that in examining a person more closely, 'we must deconstruct him or her into a complex set of relations which we can describe as a unity in no more than a very superficial manner' (2006:106).

Schiffrin illustrates this contextual determination: 'when I am teaching, I am expected to act in a certain way: to speak with some authority, raise topics for discussion, and give instructions. But such conduct will 'work' only if others engage in the practices expected of them by taking up the reciprocal status of 'students', e.g. allowing me an extended floor of talk, building on my topics, and following my instructions.' (1996:196). In this way, identity can be seen as a social positioning; what you identify with in a given context. So within the context of culture, one has a cultural identity, within the context of language, a language identity and so on – offering identities related to aspects such as class, gender, profession and education (or academia). Implicit in this sociocultural concept of identity is power, for example in the language context, terms such as 'English second language' or 'English first language' attribute a particular level of power to the identity of the speaker of English.

Identity of course depends intimately on language, in terms of the construction and definition of identity. It is unlikely that we would have a strong sense of identity without language, as identity is essentially a means of communicating or describing oneself – albeit in relation to others, but descriptions rely on language. In this sense Wojecki refers to such ideas of identity as post-structural, suggesting that 'identity, or subject positions, are socially produced and constructed through language and in relation to other subjects and institutions' (2007:172).

Gee (2000a) explains his perspective of identity as being ‘built around four perspectives on what it means to be recognized as a ‘certain kind of person’’ (2000a:100). These perspectives are nature-identity, which is a state developed from forces in nature, such as one’s gender or being an identical twin, institution-identity, which is a position authorized by authorities within institutions, such as a professor or a president, discourse-identity, which is an individual trait recognized in the discourse/ dialogue of/with ‘rational’ individuals, such as being charismatic or being a good writer, and affinity-identity, which is based on experiences shared in the practice of ‘affinity groups’, such as being from Botswana or belonging to a particular church (summarized from Gee’s table, 2000a:100). He explains, ‘rather than discrete categories, they are ways to focus our attention on different aspects of how identities are formed and sustained. Another way to put the matter is this: They are four ways to formulate questions about how identity is functioning for a specific person (child or adult) in a given context or across a set of different contexts’ (Gee, 2000a:104).

According to Cohen, within a social constructivist perspective, identity is seen as ‘a dynamic, fluid, multiplicitous construct able to adjust to the demands of the almost infinite array of contexts’ (2008:69). She argues for the tripartite model (from social psychology) of identity (consisting of 3 layers – personal, relational and collective) to be incorporated ‘into an interactional sociolinguistic framework for the purposes of discourse analysis’ (2008:69). Within the post-structural view, identity, like context, is not static, but changes with context, over time, with new experiences. Identities can be determined by social structures, by others or negotiated by individuals’ selves (Norton & Toohey, 1990). As individuals move across different contexts, their identities change. Gee (2000a) explains that we all have multiple identities connected to our performances in society (rather than our internal states). He acknowledges that we also have ‘a ‘core identity’ that holds more uniformly, for ourselves and others, across contexts’ (2000a:99). In the early nineties, Lave and Wenger saw identity as having become ‘decentred’; it had ‘lost the wholeness provided by uniform characteristics’ (1991:32).

Hall talks of his concept of identity as a ‘strategic and positional one’; one that ‘does *not* signal that stable core of the self’, but ‘accepts that identities are never unified and, in late modern times, increasingly fragmented and fractured; never singular, but multiply [and are] constructed across different, often intersecting and antagonistic, discourses, practices and positions. They are subject to a radical historicization, and are constantly in the process of

change and transformation’ (2006:17). In a similar vein, Holland et al. (2003) talk of lived identities as being ‘unfinished and in process’, and as developing in social practice. Holland et al.’s concept of identity

Emphasizes that identities are improvised – in the flow of activity within specific social situations – from the cultural resources at hand. Thus persons, and, to a lesser extent, groups, are caught in the tensions between past histories that have settled in them and the present discourses and images that attract them or somehow impinge upon them. In this continuous self-fashioning, identities are hard-won standpoints that, however dependent upon social support and however vulnerable to change, make at least a modicum of self-direction possible. They are possibilities for mediating agency. (2003:4)

They state that identities are important bases of individuals’ agency.

Harré (2008) writes of the positioning theory of social psychology, developed as part of the psychology of personhood, which focuses on how the person is shaped by positions available to them in their lived environment. The theory refers to the discursive production of selves. Through discourse practices participants constitute themselves and each other (Davies & Harré, 1990). These authors point out that discursive practices are also a resource whereby participants can negotiate new positions. In this positioning, the participants take on agency. This concept of ‘positioning’ (as opposed to ‘role’, which tends to highlight static, formal and ritualistic aspects) highlights dynamic aspects of encounters, (Davies & Harré, 1990). Positioning theory is concerned with three interconnected aspects of interpersonal encounters: ‘the changing patterns of distributions of rights and duties to perform certain categories of actions’, ‘the story lines of which such actions are meaningful components’ and ‘the meanings of people’s actions as social acts’ (Harré, 2008:51) (similar to Northedge, 2003a). Positioning theory looks at what a person can and cannot do in the context within which they are situated. These social contexts contain structures which bind people to certain ‘norms’, standards, rights and duties in terms of what they say and do (Harré, 2008). Basically this theory runs alongside discourse theory in terms of the idea that behaviours, beliefs and values are constructed by, and situated within social contexts.

Thus, these taken-for-granted rights and duties of the new environment (the institution), had to be learnt by the students in my study and this affected their senses of self. For example, some initially constructed their selves as disadvantaged and ‘other’, or not belonging, due to aspects such as their race, not having English as their mother tongue, their socio-economic status, or their perceived lowly or inferior education. At a later stage, their senses of self

might be reconstructed as successful ‘academics’, engaged in the world of academic meaning making and literacy practices.

Walker writes:

Identity is a process not a product, a matter of becoming and being, of active and creative becoming, even though shaped by relations of power and difference in society (Hall, 1996; Cockburn, 1998). Thus identities are constructed, fluid and multi-dimensional. They are both reflexive – the work we do on ourselves – and relational – how we judge ourselves in relation to others; formed by how others see us in social interchange, and by relational identification with social and cultural scripts, in the family, education and society (Chappell, et al, 2003). Crucially, ‘identities never arrive in persons ... already formed’; they require ‘considerable social work in and for the person’ (Holland et al, 1998:vii). (Walker, 2006:5)

Hall explains that, as identities are constructed within discourse, they need to be understood as being

Produced in specific historical and institutional sites within specific discursive formations and practices, by specific enunciative strategies. Moreover, they emerge within the play of specific modalities of power, and thus are more the product of the marking of difference and exclusion, than they are the sign of an identical, naturally constituted unity – an ‘identity’ in its traditional meaning (that is, an all-inclusive sameness, seamless, without internal differentiation). (2006:17)

Ivanič (1998) talks of three dimensions of social identity, consisting of a person’s values and beliefs about reality (affecting ideational meaning conveyed through language), of the person’s sense of their relative status in relation to those they are communicating with (affecting interpersonal meaning conveyed through language), and their orientation to language use (which affects the way they construct their message).

Walker speaks of learning as being the ‘pivot between identity formation and students’ agency outcomes’ (2006:1). I focus on *identity as a learner* because I believe that it is only through a conception of self as learner that one opens oneself up to learning. As I have suggested, there is a difference between coming to an institution of Higher Education to *learn* and coming to *get a degree*. Conceiving one’s identity as learner is not necessarily as simple as it sounds – it requires a taking on of agency in so doing; agency implies taking control or being in control, and acting. The intensity of the learning depends upon the intensity or strength of agency – at the level of cognitive processes and awareness.

Students’ sense of self (how they see themselves, their subjectivity) and identity (how they are identified – by themselves and others in certain contexts; a social self) (Biesta & Tedder, 2006a; Gee, 2000a) is likely to be affected on entry to the institution and to undergo changes

as they adapt to the practices of the institution. The students in my study came to the institution with already established social and professional identities, but not academic identities. Naturally, this entailed challenges and adjustments, or negotiations and renegotiations of the identities (cf. Ecclestone et al., 2005) or, conflicts of identity between their ‘former selves’ and their ‘becoming-selves’ (Clark & Ivanič, 1997). The focus of my thesis includes attention to students’ learner identities and writer identities, specifically.

Agency in learning

Students’ approach to learning is influenced by how they conceive learning – whether it is seen as reproductive or transformative, and this approach would influence the outcome of the learning, such as achieving a personal understanding of what they have learnt (Entwistle, 1998). Boughey (2007) explains these reproductive and transformative, or constructive, conceptions of learning. The former places a value on the learner’s ability to give back what the teacher has ‘given out’ to the learner. The latter places value on the learner’s ability to use new knowledge to somehow transform existing knowledge. This transformative or constructive conception of learning requires active agency in the learning. Boughey points out that students will relate to texts, written and spoken, and will produce texts differently, depending on their conception of learning;

For students holding a reproductive conception of learning, texts produced by lecturers and others are things to be remembered and repeated. Their own role is therefore likely to be perceived as that of text *reproducer* rather than of text *producer* and the role of the lecturer or reader of those texts to be that of arbiter of the accuracy of that reproduction.

(Boughey, 2007:9)

Biesta et al. (2008) see ‘learning as enabled and constrained by the interrelationships between the positions of the learner and the learning, and the dispositions and actions of the learner’ (2008:np). The positions of the learner could refer to social structures (class, race), the generation they belong to and the situation where learning takes place. ‘Agency is influenced by the positions of the actor, the positions and actions of others, and by the identity and dispositions of the actor. It can contribute to the consolidation of and/or change to any of these. The achievement and utilisation of agency is enabled and constrained by learning, and can, in turn, enable and/or constrain new learning’ (Biesta et al., 2008:np). Walker states that, agency ‘enables us to imagine and act towards new ways of being’ (2006:4).

The notion of agency is understood in a variety of ways. It can be seen simply as a synonym for individual action, which implicitly emphasizes ‘the undetermined nature of human action’

(Biesta & Tedder, 2006a:5). It can also be seen as more of an interactive activity by the individual within their environment, a view which acknowledges the determining effects of social structures on human action. In other words, agency can be seen as an independent individual capacity, depicting agency as an internal faculty, thereby retaining ‘a sense of continuity in a world of flux’ (Biesta & Tedder, 2006a:6), or it can be seen as situated in a social, economic and historical context, depicting agency as a capacity provided for and constrained by the individual’s environment – past, present and future. Emirbayer and Mische see agency as ‘the capacity of actors to critically shape their own responsiveness to problematic situations’ (1998:971), rather than simply responding to life events.

Emirbayer and Mische argue that discussions around agency as a notion, have so far, failed to distinguish it as an analytical category in its own right:

The term agency itself has maintained an elusive, albeit resonant, vagueness; it has all too seldom inspired systematic analysis, despite the long list of terms with which it has been associated: self-hood, motivation, will, purposiveness, intentionality, choice, initiative, freedom, and creativity. ... The result has been a flat and impoverished conception that... tends to remain so tightly bound to structure that one loses sight of the different ways in which agency actually shapes social action. (1998:963)

A notion of a three-dimensional nature or ‘chordal triad’ of agency was drawn up by Emirbayer and Mische (1998). According to this ‘chordal triad’, agency must acknowledge influences from the past, orientations towards the future *and* engagement with the present (what they referred to as the *iterational*, the *projective* and the *practical-evaluative* dimensions of agency). To understand agency, we must focus on the *dynamic interplay* between these three dimensions – understanding the influence and constraints of the context of the action. How people see themselves (the stories they tell themselves) in relation to the past, future and present affects the action or agency they take. In the context of learning, for example, this ‘chordal triad’ of agency would take into consideration influences from the past such as attitudes towards school and learning by the learner and their social environment, how learning happened, what characteristics were regarded as those of a good learner. In terms of orientations towards the future, it would consider what the purpose of learning is seen to be – is it seen as a means to get the grade, produce a product, part of learning or developing new knowledge? In terms of engagement with the present, how students deal with language and discourse, or their learning situation, is a potential focus – for example, do they see their learning situation as an alien environment, and do they have notions of a judgemental expert lecturer? Biesta and Tedder add that ‘people’s sense of agency, and

possibly the way in which they (are able to) talk about their orientations towards the past, future and present – the narration of their orientations – is an important factor in their actual agency as well’ (2006a:12). For example, if the learner sees themselves as disadvantaged, it can affect their role (and how they regard their role) in their learning.

Ingleton and Cadman (2000) refer to agency as the ability to act with confidence in one’s learning. They also attribute this ability to past and present experiences of social relationships. Whilst identity refers to a sense of self, agency is acting with that sense of self – with intention, or a sense of purpose. The agent in learning refers to the source or do-er of the activities happening in the processes. Biesta and Tedder refer to agency as ‘an ability to exert control over and give direction to one’s life’ (2006a:3). These authors suggest that, rather than seeing agency as a capacity possessed by an individual, it should be understood as something achieved in action – within temporal-relational contexts; in other words, ever changing ones. They also emphasize that the achievement of agency is seen as always resulting ‘from a combination of individual efforts and available resources (such as economic, cultural and social capital)’ (2006a:4). In considering agency in learning, for example, Williams reminds us, ‘Who acts, who is allowed to act and who is held responsible for actions, are relevant factors’ (1993:353). So students have to *learn* how to *do* agency at the institution/in the institutional environment. Illustrations of this learning are highlighted in my analysis chapters. An example is the conflicts between the ways in which students had been taught to relate to content written by others – which they were required to show they *knew* (and could therefore repeat), and the ways in which they were now expected to relate to texts written by others – which they are required to show they *understand* (and can explain, discuss, illustrate and possibly critique). Having mostly come from backgrounds which favoured the reproductive conception of learning, the students in my study had a narrow view of the agency they needed – or were allowed to take on in their learning. So their transitions involved new practices of agency within their learning and perceptions – in terms of knowledge constructing, as opposed to knowledge consuming, or making meaning, as opposed to being given meaning.

Thus, agency (in learning) needs to be propagated in or taught to learners at the institution; they do not arrive with it, and with adult learners, this is sometimes forgotten. As Biesta and Tedder state, traditionally ‘agency is seen as an educational aim and educational ideal and as the desired outcome of educational processes. This explains why agency

primarily figures as a justification of particular educational arrangements and interventions' (2006a:5).

Biesta and Tedder co-ordinated the Learning Lives project, a study of life histories of adult learners. One of the aims of this project was to understand the relationship between learning and agency (with adult learners), and so they were interested in these adults' sense of self or identity. They claim that their biographical approach made 'it possible to gain an understanding of the role of narrative – life stories– in understanding relationships between learning and agency ... while the interest in identity makes it possible to investigate how relationships between learning and agency are mediated by the participants' sense of self' (Biesta & Tedder, 2006a:6). Their work is based on an understanding of learning as a way in which an individual responds to events in their life, usually in an attempt to keep control; these responses can range from being simply adaptive, to more active, generative learning (Biesta et al., 2005). This learning can be 'tacit, delayed, reflective or critical' (Ecclestone et al.,⁴ 2005:14). In a later paper Ecclestone states, 'Agency is therefore variously seen as requiring self-direction, self-efficacy, opportunities to exercise autonomy and perhaps a desire to shape a specific field or context' (2007:124).

Towards the end of their Learning Lives project, Biesta et al. (2008) offer two key ideas on agency, based on their findings. Firstly, they suggest that 'agency should be understood in an ecological way, i.e., strongly connected to 'context', and [secondly] the idea that agency should not be understood as a capacity or possession of the individual, but as something that is achieved in particular (transactional) situations' (Biesta et al., 2008:27). They conclude:

We have taken agency to be about the (situated) ability to give direction to one's life We have found that learning itself may or may not be agentially driven: it can be self-initiated or forced by others or be incidental. Learning may result in increase or decrease of agency. Increased agency seems to be more obvious and common, but much depends on the extent to which people acknowledge that they have learned something. This is more obvious in relation to formal education and training, often because qualifications open up new possibilities for action. Experiences of successful learning also impact positively on people's self-confidence, which in turn can lead to increased agency in many aspects of their lives. The research indicates that the extent to which learning 'translates' into agency, depends on a range of factors and also on the particular 'ecological' conditions of people's field of action. Decreased agency through learning occurs when people learn that things are too difficult or that they cannot cope, which, in turn, impacts upon their sense of self. (Biesta et al., 2008, 28)

Grimm and Penti (1998) claim that agency is limited when a singular identity is insisted upon, and, that allowing multiple identities to come to the fore at once, provides more potential for agency. Thus, agency requires a sense of self and recognition of personhood;

⁴ These authors were working in the same research outfit as Biesta et al.

this is a complex merging and interaction of the experiences of the writer and the concurrent roles or identities they have.

Voice in learning

The aspect of the student's voice is often referred to in the Arts and Social Science disciplines in higher education – where debate between learners is often a central feature. At this point, I would like to briefly outline Barnett's (2007) explanation of voice in learning. I will touch on voice in writing shortly. In '*A Will to Learn*', Barnett explains:

A genuine higher education puts students on the spot. It does not let them evade themselves. It not merely encourages the student to develop her own point of view, but requires the student to state *her* reasons for her point of view. The student is pressed relentlessly and, ultimately, the pressing is done by the student herself. She internalizes the interrogative voices. And in the process, takes on her own voice. (2007:54)

He refers to Batchelor (2006) who talks of three terms used around student voice – uncovering, recovering, and discovering. Barnett examines the implications of each of these:

The idea of 'recovering' the student voice implies a voice that was there, but has been suppressed (whether by the student herself and/or by an oppressive learning environment); the idea of 'uncovering' the voice implies a voice that has had difficulty in being heard, it being overlain by other presences, even other voices; while the idea of 'discovering' suggests the possibility of a voice that no-one dreamt about and yet was there, even if as a potential, just waiting to emerge. ...[Although these terms differ, they have in common, the implication of] a latent potentiality, not fully realized; each looks to a process of becoming, in which a voice is realized over time; and each implies a backwards horizon of student being – unfulfilled at that – but each also has a future horizon written into it, holding open the possibility of a better or truer or even a new voice. (2007:55)

Batchelor also conceptualised student voice in three elements: 'an epistemological voice, or a voice for knowing, a practical voice, or a voice for doing, and an ontological voice, or a voice for being and becoming' She believed that the voice for being and becoming was not as valued and validated in contemporary higher education, and was therefore more vulnerable than voices for knowing and doing: however, this voice is fundamental to the successful realization of the other two voices. And she claims, 'the possibility of attaining integrity of voice is undermined' (Batchelor, 2006:226).

Barnett (2007) describes the student's 'becoming' voice as being like an ensemble jazz player's improvisation, thus it is neither solo nor in unison with others. This voice still 'fits' with those around the student in terms of tones, offerings, styles – the *practices* of the discipline, but it has its own offering to those around the student. Barnett states, 'Voice implies a reaching out to the world, but it is more than that. The voice looks for an audience. The voice hopes to have an impact. The self forming itself *and* having an impact on others in

so doing – these are the dual possibilities opened by voice’ (2007:90). He continues to explain that this makes two kinds of student voice apparent: an embodied voice, which he calls the ‘pedagogical voice’, and which is realized through autonomy, and a metaphorical voice which he calls the ‘educational voice’, and which is realized through authenticity. The first is a voice that is manifestly present (or not) – the student makes their presence felt – it is vocal; thoughts and feelings are voiced or expressed – to be heard and listened to. The second is where the student becomes themselves – it is more metaphorical, metaphysical, where the student authentically places themselves in the world – a positioning of self. Barnett adds:

Higher education does much to suppress voice. It unduly censures; it places tight boundaries – of ‘disciplines’ – around students’ thoughts; it asserts itself in hierarchical pedagogical relationships; it even belittles self, in all kinds of subtle and not so subtle ways Not surprisingly, the student sometimes submerges her voice in deference to the ‘authority’ of the teacher, often all too keenly asserted, or under a sea of references. (2007:94)

The students in my course were not used to being asked for their opinion in class – even verbally, let alone in their writing. Their educational practices, even as teachers, had been around notions of the teacher (expert/authority) speaking or telling, and the learner listening to, or absorbing what was told as knowledge. Just as small group work was a new practice for most of them, so expressing their opinions vocally was also unpractised.

Bakhtin also spoke of voice and ‘human coming-to-consciousness’. He refers to voice as ‘The speaking personality, the speaking consciousness. A voice always has a will or desire behind it, its own timbre and overtures’ (1981:434). He introduces the idea of a heteroglossic notion of voice in his essay, ‘Discourse in the Novel’ (1981). He explains his term ‘heteroglossia’ as the way in which meaning of utterances is operated – where context is central;

At any given time, in any given place, there will be a set of conditions – social, historical, meteorological, physiological – that will insure that a word uttered in that place and at that time will have a meaning different than it would have under any other conditions; all utterances are heteroglot in that they are functions of a matrix of forces practically impossible to recoup, and therefore impossible to resolve.

(Bakhtin, 1981:428)

Thus the heteroglossic notion of voice refers to the conflict of various discourses within the same language; where every utterance contains traces of other utterances. Roberts defines heteroglossia as ‘another’s speech in another’s language, serving to express authorial intentions but in a refracted way’ (in Bakhtin, 1994:259). As became evident in my study, students often attempted to write, or express their apparent intentions in a ‘language’ that was not their own – and this occurred in their writing as journal partners, as academic students

and as relators of other voices, for example, they may have used phraseology or ‘big’ words rather than their own, apparently, simplistic, words.

In terms of becoming, or, as Bakhtin terms it, ‘coming-to-consciousness’, he explains it as a struggle between two types of discourse: authoritative discourse and internally persuasive discourse. He refers to authoritative discourse as

Privileged language that approaches us from without; it is distanced, taboo, and permits no play with its framing context (sacred writ, for example). We recite it. It has great power over us, but only while in power; if ever dethroned, it immediately becomes a dead thing, a relic.

(1981:424)

His concept of internally persuasive discourse is that which entails the speaker’s own words, emphases, gestures and modifications, and through these, both instil and convey the speaker’s own meanings. In other words, this coming-to-consciousness entailed a struggle between ‘an attempt to assimilate more into one’s own system, and the simultaneous freeing of one’s own discourse from the authoritative word, or from previous earlier persuasive words that have ceased to mean’ (1981:424). Glimpses of this journey and struggle became apparent in my readings of students’ journal entries. I hope to illustrate this in my later chapters.

So far, I have spoken of identity, agency and voice in learning; now I wish to consider ideas around identity, agency and voice specifically in academic writing.

Identity, agency and voice in academic writing

Lea’s (1998) research on the learning of adult distant learners found two approaches to learning, which she claims are integrally related to literacy practices. These are what she terms the ‘reformulation’ approach and the ‘challenge’ approach. The reformulation approach was one where the student saw the purpose of the assignment as reformulating what they had read in their own words. In doing so, they did not create a dialogic relationship to the texts; in other words, they did not actively engage with the text as a process of constructing knowledge of their own. Instead, they appeared to concede to the authority of the texts and read them in a linear fashion. Here, in attempting to make sense of the text, students attempt to replicate it and its authority. The challenge approach appears to be more agentic; it is related to the context of the texts students are reading and writing. There is thus more of a dialogic relationship to the texts – where students take up ideas from them and relate them to their own cultural contexts. There appears to be more active engagement with the course

content in terms of students' own needs and contexts. Although the result of this was often writing that was less coherent and less structured, Lea claims that this approach

Is fundamentally concerned with issues of confidence, power and identity in academic settings and how these are embedded within academic texts (cf. Ivanič 1998). Central to our understanding of the challenge approach is an understanding of what adult students bring to their studies and the relationships between the production of their learning texts and the wider cultural social contexts within which they are learning. Adult learners in higher education are learning to construct their knowledge in ways which make it appropriate for assessment. Simultaneously, they are struggling to maintain a sense of themselves and the validity of other ways of knowing in their academic study. (Lea, 1998:165)

Identity in writing

Boughey (2007) found that students' lack of knowledge of the roles of author and reader appropriate to academic text influenced the texts they produced. She uses the term 'tenor', referring to meanings concerning the relationship between the writer and the reader: 'Tenor also relates to students' understanding of their own role as writers of academic texts as well as to their understanding of their relationship to the lecturer who will read them. This understanding is influenced by their perception of the function of an academic text that, in turn, is related to perceptions of the nature of learning itself' (Boughey, 2007:7).

Hyland states,

Students often approach university writing assignments with the idea that academic prose is dry and impersonal. They have been taught that this kind of writing involves an objective exploration of ideas that transcends the individual. They must 'leave their personalities at the door', and subordinate their views, actions, and personality to its rigid conventions of anonymity. (2002a:351)

However, academic writing is actually about the representation of self in addition to the conveyance of ideas. Hyland explains that academic writing is not actually impersonal, but that 'writers gain credibility by projecting an identity invested with individual authority displaying confidence in their evaluations and commitment to their ideas' (2002b:1091). This projecting of identity is done through the use of first person pronouns, but he says often second language writers are not comfortable using them due to connotations of authority. (I think it is also likely to be the 'old school' type of writing that they have learnt; allowance of the first person in academic writing is a relatively new occurrence.) Hyland refers to academic writing as 'an act of identity' (2002b:1092).

Abasi et al. (2006) relate to Fairclough's (1992) explanation that, in order to write successfully (in an academic context), students need to adopt the subject positions or the

social identities that the discourse(s) of their chosen disciplinary communities require of them. Abasi et al. (2006) continue to explain that, in the process of writing, the textual decisions that writers are making are, at the same time, ‘decisions of self-representation and identity construction’ (2006:104).

Ivanič (1998) outlines three aspects to a writer’s identity, the ‘autobiographical self’, the ‘discoursal self’⁵ and the ‘self as author’, all of which are, ‘shaped by the ‘possibilities for self-hood’ in the socio-cultural context in which a person lives and writes’ (Ivanič & Weldon, 1999:169). ‘Possibilities for self-hood’ are ‘socially available subject positions, sustained by all forms of social practice’ (ibid). These possibilities are ‘social’ identities, as opposed to individual ones (Ivanič, 1998); they are ‘identities that are set up for people by the conventions [‘abstract rules of behaviour’] for all types of action, of which writing is one’ (Clark & Ivanič, 1997:137). Whilst these conventions constrain or enable us, since they are socially constructed, they can also be socially challenged (Clark & Ivanič, 1997). The autobiographical self refers to the self that writers bring to their act of writing – their experiences and sense of identity. This ‘self’ is socially constrained and constructed by the possibilities for self-hood in the writer’s life-history, such as their experiences, interests, ideas, opportunities and people they have come across, their individual repertoire of practices – including literacy ones – all of which are enabled or constrained by socio-economic factors (Clark & Ivanič, 1997; Ivanič, 1998). A writer’s autobiographical self constantly evolves over time (Ivanič, 1998), due to new experiences, ideas and constructions of the self. The ‘discoursal self’ is that which is constructed through linguistic and other resources, such as discourses and genres, in the act of writing, (those ‘possibilities for selfhood’ that are available around them); it is the impression the writer conveys of themselves – consciously or unconsciously, through factors such as their style and language or discoursal characteristics of the writing, which includes values, beliefs and power relations in the social context in which they were written. ‘It is concerned with the writer’s ‘voice’ in the sense of the way they want to sound, rather than in the sense of the stance they are taking’ (Ivanič, 1998:25). This impression can be of multiple types and contradictory (Ivanič, 1998). The ‘self as author’ ‘manifests itself in the degree of authoritativeness with which a writer writes’ (Ivanič & Weldon, 1999:169). This is concerned with what we call the writer’s voice, the establishment of an authorial presence – for example, whether they take agency (power) or

⁵ In a similar vein she speaks of the autobiographical identity and discoursal identity.

efface themselves through attributing their ideas to other authorities, (Ivanič, 1998). The notion of agency within the writing is a vital aspect of successful academic writing.

Viewing oneself as an ‘author’ – feeling authoritative, and feeling the right to exert a presence in the text, is often related to the sense of power and status writers bring with them from their life-history. This sense of the right to authorship is, we suggest, often associated with the gender, class and ethnicity of the writer: white middle-class men are likely, for socio-historical reasons, to have a greater sense of authority than most black, working-class women.

(Clark & Ivanič, 1997:152)

Ivanič (1998) does note that the different aspects of the identity of an actual writer can change from one act of writing to the next. This can be due to different demands of different pieces of writing, different perceptions of the reader or differing engagement with the content of what they are writing about.

Agency in writing

Grimm and Penti (1998) point out that, helping students to achieve agency in writing requires more than understanding their purpose and audience. Subject positions in writing have to be created within the discourse of the institution, its socially sanctioned ways of thinking, behaving and valuing.

In the academy, evidence of agency is seen in aspects of referencing, use of authorities, engagement with readings or viewpoints of others and in argument in writing. An authorial voice makes agency visible. However, it is not so visible *before* that; in other words, agency is not transparently ‘voiced’. There are two obvious understandings of agency in writing (and learning): that of manipulating what is said, which is performative around knowledge, and a personal ‘I’, which is performative around the social.

Considering Emirbayer and Mische’s (1998) ‘chordal triad of agency’ in terms of the context of writing, factors necessary to consider in terms of influences from the past may be what used to be regarded as good writing – reproducing other texts, creative writing. In terms of orientations towards the future, factors to consider might be those such as, beliefs about the purpose of writing – is it seen as part of learning or developing new knowledge, or simply in terms of satisfying a task (for the institution, the discipline, or the lecturer)? And in terms of engagement with the present, how they deal with their readings and writing, and what notions they have of their reader.

Agency could be carried out at different levels. Flannery (2008) provides three examples: in simply conveying words, the speaker or writer is the ‘animator’ of the words produced. The

individual could also be ‘author’ of the statements, in that they have selected the sentiments expressed and the words to do this. The speaker or writer can also be the ‘principal’, or the one ‘whose position is established by the words that are spoken’ (2008:114). It is perhaps a movement through these levels that may illustrate the ideal ‘becoming’ that we hope for in students’ writing.

Voice in writing

In Western academic (Arts and Social Science) environments, ‘voice’ is an oft-banded concept in the discourse around academic literacy and discussions of students’ writing, and it relates to (but is not the same as) concepts such as agency and identity of learners. This ‘voice’ in writing, and the apparent need for it, is, in fact, a construct, generally of Western academic cultures (of which I am a part). Voice in academic writing could simply be understood as successful academic writing. A ‘good’ or ‘successful’ academic writer appears confident, is able to construct an academic argument of their own to the reader in a logical, coherent manner, explain their ideas to the reader using evidence, examples and weaving in ideas from elsewhere – to enhance their own ideas. Their viewpoint is clear. Detecting the writer’s voice in a text entails the reader having a sense of their person and experiencing their viewpoints.

Bowden (1995) in tracing the history of the concept of voice, notes that the emphasis on personal attitude and expression only began to influence the nature of the spoken/written convergence in writing instruction in the last century. The ‘voice metaphor’ became popular in the 70s and in many Arts and Social Science disciplines, is now considered as crucial in academic writing. (In fact this construct of voice may actually be regarded as one of social science writing in the West or, what Brice-Heath, Street, Barton and others have referred to as ‘essayist literacy’.) In this sense, voice signifies individuality. Bowden sums up:

The use of ‘voice’ reflects the reinstitution of an oral component into the classroom in the form of talk – literal, active, and dramatic talk. Furthermore, this is personal talk, emphasizing not only what the student has to say but how the student says it in efforts to valorize and *author-ize* her words. (1995:180)

She adds that this idea of writing with voice brings life to the writing, as the speaker is now injected back into the discourse. The old ‘voiceless’ academic writing was more distant from self; it was the essay, and not the *self*, that spoke as an authority – the concept of first person within the writing was taboo in academic essays or research reports⁶. It was seen as not being

⁶ ‘The author / researcher is of the opinion that...’, rather than ‘I think...’.

objective or sufficiently analytical of scholarly. So, in fact, bringing in voice to academia is bringing in a new concept (or ‘voice’) into an old style⁷.

Whilst Bowden acknowledges that there are not alternatives, she does have some criticisms with the concept of voice in writing. She suggests that the literal understanding of voice, can reveal much more than writing; the sound and therefore the speaker can be located and other attributes which influence the meaning of what is said can be noted, such as aspects of the speaker’s identity (their authority) and state (their emotions or level of seriousness). ‘Oral features like stress and intonation may be keyed or suggested through word order, underlining, or italics, but voice in writing can only be metaphoric in nature’ (1995:185). Her concern is that, in using the metaphor of ‘voice in writing’, we send mixed messages to our students. Whilst we easily use this voice metaphor, our students may not yet understand it. In my own experience, my initial focus on drawing out voice often resulted in students’ essays being all their voice and no other voices (like the ‘creative writing’ of high school). I learnt that I needed to change to a focus on ‘*hearing* voices’ – including one’s own, but others as well.

The concept of ‘voice’ in discussions of students’ writing has many attributes. ‘Voice’ can be used to refer to the student’s own views and to the ability to present other views as other voices, in which community the student’s voice also has a place. In other words, voice can be conceptualized as a sign of individuality or as participatory, heard as part of a discussion. Apart from the voices of others – authors, lecturers, discussants, there are a multitude of ‘voices’ that can be heard from the learners themselves in their writing.

In order to exhibit ‘voice’, or ‘ownership’, the student writer has to have a sense of self or identity. They need to develop confidence in this identity and from there they can take agency and sound out their voice within their writing. Northedge writes, ‘Voice requires a sense of one’s identity within the discourse community... [and thus] support in establishing voice is a vital component of courses for students from diverse backgrounds’ (2003a:25). As teachers, we know that, in order to offer an argument, a position or *voice* is needed, which requires agency. However, whilst it is not that students do not arrive with either, they are seldom taught how to sound their *voice* in their writing; students do not immediately understand what it means when we say we want to ‘hear’ their ‘voice’ in their writing. This ‘voicing’ is a

⁷ Not everyone is bought by this focus on voice in student writing, Stapleton for example, is concerned that the idea of voice being so important ‘may result in learners who are more concerned with identity than ideas’ and he rues the lack of attention to ‘the quality of the content, the level of abstraction, the sophistication of the argumentation, the originality, or the creativity in reference to student writing’ (Stapleton, 2002:p13). However, I think others assume these to come together with voice (and this has perhaps been overlooked).

complex procedure as it involves the weaving together of other voices – at first, certainly – with the other voices appearing to dominate. When we talk to students about ‘seeing’ or ‘hearing’ their voice in their writing, ultimately we want to have a clear idea of their views but they will not have ‘views’ on topics they know little of when they first come here.

Voice in writing is essentially the representation of the writer’s self through various means: tone, opinion, style. In his manual on writing, Fulwiler (2002), like Ivanič and Camps (2001), explains that, ultimately in our written communications, the style, content and arrangement of our writing combine to represent us. He explains that the writer’s voice is something that develops almost unconsciously, and largely apart from more conscious techniques that are focused on in learning to write:

In writing, we can’t, of course, hear the timbre of the voice or see the expressions on the face. Instead, we hear the voice through our reading, perhaps gleaning our first clues about the writer from the particular combination of words, punctuation, sentences, and paragraphs that we call *style*.
(Fulwiler, 2002:199)

Clark and Ivanič (1997) talk of ‘voice’ as authorial presence in the writer’s text – it is:

The visible evidence of writers’ feeling of authoritativeness and sense of themselves as authors. Some writers, in some types of writing, make their ‘voice’ in this sense heard more than others. Writers may put themselves at the centre of the writing, exerting control over it and establishing a presence within it. At the other extreme writers may relinquish control of the situation to other, named authorities, or to some abstract, impersonal source, or perhaps to the reader.
(Clark & Ivanič, 1997:152)

Talking about voice in the singular here is misleading in a sense – there are of course many different voices that we could adopt in our writing, depending on the purpose, audience and situation of our writing. We are a collection of several (genuine) voices (Fulwiler, 2002). In writing, we put on an act, and our meaning changes with our purpose. Ede explains,

Just as you dress differently on different occasions, as a writer you assume different voices in different situations. If you’re writing an essay about a personal experience, you may work hard to create a strong personal voice in your essay.... If you’re writing a report or essay exam, you will adopt a more formal, public tone. Whatever the situation, the choices you make as you write and revise ... will determine how readers interpret and respond to your presence in the text.
(in Bowden, 1995:175)

So, according to this view, the appearance of ‘voice’ can be seen as a particular tone.

Ivanič and Camps (2001b) distinguish between an understanding of ‘voice’ in student writing as an expression of authoritativeness (own views) and as self-representation, always inherent in the writing. They argue that ‘the lexical, syntactic, organizational, and even the material aspects of writing, construct identity just as much as do the phonetic and prosodic aspects of speech, and thus writing always conveys a representation of the self of the writer’ (2001b:3).

The understanding of voice as authoritative, and the requirement of this in students' writing, begs consideration of the socio-cultural context of students, for example, in terms of previous learning and values attached to critical and independent thought.

Usually at school, the 'voices' to be incorporated into one's (educational/academic) writing have been those of the teacher and the textbook (usually only one per subject, and especially in poorly resourced schools). There has usually been little need for, firstly, a concentration on referencing, as the teacher and student both know where the information is from, and secondly little need to think critically about what is given by the teacher or the textbook – questioning the truth of either of these would not get a pass, and be regarded as deviant or disrespectful behaviour. So critical thinking, questioning (to/beyond an extent), and considering different viewpoints (or that there are), is usually left as an un-mastered skill. In fact, consider the jolt to values in the transition from school to university, critical thinking and questioning at school may be regarded as deviant or unacceptable or disrespectful, whereas, these aptitudes are suddenly lauded and definitely required at university broadly, in the Arts and Social Sciences faculties at least.

The concept of voice and its connotations is quite different in the academic context than the everyday or professional context. Northedge describes the 'voice' of everyday discourses as 'urgent, personal, emotive and tribal', of professional discourses as 'brisk, assertive, businesslike and institutional', and of academic discourses as 'unhurried, speculative, analytical and uncommitted' (2003a:24). Questioning or debate in response to these voices is also perceived in different ways; debate or argument in everyday discourses entails a crisis of authority – in the non-acceptance of the prevailing view. In professional discourses, debate is allowed under certain and controlled conditions and questioning is usually only accepted for clarification purposes (with the intention of keeping in order). However, debate is considered a natural and important element of academic discourses, where nothing is taken for granted, and everything is questionable – critique is essential.

Halliday (in Ivanič & Camps, 2001a), speaks of three macro functions of language – the ideational, where something is represented in talking or writing, the interpersonal, concerned with interaction with others, and the textual in which a text is shaped. Ivanič and Camps talk about 'voice' in terms of three types of positioning – which they relate to Halliday's macro functions of language:

Positioning in terms of the writers' ways of representing the world ('ideational positioning');
positioning in terms of their relative authoritativeness or tentativeness and in terms of the

writers' relationship with their readers ('interpersonal positioning'); and positioning in terms of the writers' preferred ways of turning meanings into text ('textual positioning'). (2001a:4)

They propose that 'the construction of identity is a property of all three macrofunctions: of the whole integrated system of language' (2001a:10).

The varied roles that are taken on in writing mentioned earlier all need to be learnt by students. Relating knowledge (by which I mean ideas gained) from readings also surely has to go through a modelling and then a crawling stage before students learn to balance on two feet so to speak. Repeating ideas from readings is a stage towards development of voice (like learning to multitask).

I would like to return here to Bakhtin's (1981) notion of 'human coming-to-consciousness', as being a struggle between authoritative discourse and internally persuasive discourse. He claims that once someone else's ideological discourse has become internally persuasive for the individual, a multitude of possibilities open up. This is part of the process of the evolution of individual consciousness. He states that

The importance of struggling with another's discourse, its influence in the history of an individual's coming to ideological consciousness, is enormous. One's own discourse and one's own voice, although born of another or dynamically stimulated by another, will sooner or later begin to liberate themselves from the authority of the other's discourse. This process is made more complex by the fact that a variety of alien voices enter into the struggle for influence within an individual's consciousness (just as they struggle with one another in surrounding social reality). All this creates fertile soil for experimentally objectifying another's discourse.

(Bakhtin, 1994:79)

Learning to write in academia is a form of 'becoming'; we write to express our unique selves, and in doing so, we give 'voice' to both our ideas and ourselves. Harris states, 'Writing is not simply a tool we use to express a self we already have; it is a means by which we form a self to express' (in Lensmire, 1998:266). The coming of voice is a journey through disparate personalities, and one of sifting and shaping of the disparate personalities involved in the self of the writer to emerge as an identifiable entity, an agent in the student's writing. As Lensmire (1998) explains, although the development and expression of one's voice is a risky endeavour, it is one that yields great potential for growth and new discoveries, through the very struggles it entails (with the voices of others). He proposes thinking of voice as a project; something that is in a process of development, sculpting through time and context. Thus, it involves trying out of voices (identities), mimicking, modelling, shadowing or hiding behind others – like many life developments through which the self emerges. In regarding

voice in this way, he says the activity and agency of student writers is reaffirmed in the production of their voices.

Lensmire talks of social struggles that students confront in the development of their voices: firstly, that of using

Something old to do something new. That is, the struggle to invest words, phrases, styles, structures that have been used before - the given of convention and tradition - with new meaning, a meaning that is adequate to the student's goals for expression and the demands of the particular speech or writing situation with which he is confronted... [Another is] the struggle to please or satisfy their audience. (Lensmire, 1998:282)

In expressing their 'voices', students are also having to play into what they think their lecturers want them to say (so there may be confusions and contradictions). In my relating of students' grapples with use of other voices in their writing, I use the themes of 'old', 'odd' and 'new' voices, relating to the conventions and traditions brought with them, the struggles or challenges that ensue, and their emerging selves in their writing. What is very apparent in my research is the loss of voice – in moving from their social and professional worlds to academia, these students have to move from voicing orally to doing it on paper.

The issue of referencing in academic writing and the issue of plagiarism

One of the social practices at our higher educational institutions is that of referencing – done in order to acknowledge the work of others, but also in order to distinguish between different voices in the academic debates, thus making lines of argument clear. In this section I discuss the issue of referencing and the notion of plagiarism, often bandied about alongside instructions on referencing to students, and how it affects students who are not acquainted with the practice of referencing.

As has been described, for many of our students, their schooling environments placed value on learners repeating what had been given to them, rather than producing meaning for themselves⁸. However, often there is not any internship or space for an official transition from repeating the views of others to the production of original ideas alongside views expressed by others. Distinguishing with any clarity between students' own ideas and the ideas they have come across in their readings, is often a great challenge for new students in their writing. It is a skill which takes much practise, trial and error before it is mastered. It is certainly at first, an alienating mechanism for them.

⁸ Many of them as teachers have been replicating the same pedagogy.

The nature of academic writing is assertive and self-confident, and students do not usually feel this on entry to the institution, so they battle immediately. How does one acquire a manner of expressing oneself in an appropriate way in writing at university? Angelil-Carter claims that, for initiates, ‘there is no other way than to be a squatter, to live in the discourses of academia without owning them...’ (2000:29). In other words, the process of adopting this discourse begins with donning attire that may not belong to oneself – and may not fit. This is where students often get stuck between the words of others, or caught within others’ voices. The practice of referencing is fairly unique to academic writing. Angelil-Carter (2000) refers to referencing as being essential to ‘an understanding of knowledge as constructed, debated and contested’, usually a new idea to new students.

Much has been written on issues of referencing and plagiarism in students’ writing and on why they ‘plagiarise’. In fact, the fear of being caught plagiarising is huge amongst entering students – as I will demonstrate; it is a fear that is somehow instilled in students almost on entry to the academy. I assume the fear is there because the students are aware that they are ignorant of the actual rules and fear that they could inadvertently ‘commit a crime’. Plagiarism and referencing are often spoken about together – unfairly: referencing is a technique within academic writing; plagiarism is a crime – an intended falsitude. My focus here is not plagiarism but students’ developing voice and relationships with other voices in their writing.

Whilst certainly, plagiarism does get committed by students, the bulk of what is written about as plagiarism is the faulty adoption of a technique specific to the (higher) educational institution by learners. I prefer to refer to this as ‘inappropriate intertextuality’, or ‘intervoicedness’. (Abasi et al. (2006) use the term ‘unacceptable intertextuality’.) Chandrasoma et al. argue for the dismissal of the notion of plagiarism and, instead for an understanding of the distinction between ‘transgressive and non-transgressive intertextuality’. They claim ‘once textual borrowings are seen in this light, we are more able to focus on the crucial issues of writing, identity, power, knowledge, disciplinary dynamics, and discourse that underlie intertextuality’ (2004:171).

The discourse around plagiarism causes alienation for students and thus affects identity:

To understand how identity is regulated through plagiarism, it is important to understand that most academic honesty policies and most professors make little distinction between intentional and unintentional plagiarism... Regardless of intent, students are responsible to document correctly, and if they do not, they will be punished. (Valentine, 2006:94)

Students in my class were aware of this expectation and, not being acquainted with the required techniques of academic writing and referencing, lived in fear of being ‘caught out’.

Rather than being intentional cheaters, as has been mentioned, the majority of students in my study did not know how to reference (and often do not completely understand why – due to different understandings of the shared-ness or property or ownership of knowledge, and/or histories of practice – where, according to their schooling experience, it was simply assumed that both the writer (learner) and the reader (teacher) knew where the information was from (the textbook). Some students mentioned that they only had one textbook at school, and so there was no need to state where they got the information. The taking on of weaving voices of others, and of referencing, was often further compounded by language difficulties.

Cadman (2005a:480) notes that for her students, ‘developing a critical approach figured notably as a challenge’ in their experiences at her institution. This was very much the case with students in my study, who related histories of simple regurgitation or passive learning; feeding back what was told to them by teachers or presented in readings, with no debate or critical thinking required or encouraged. This type of ‘learning’ or ‘thinking’ did not require a distinction of different voices or views, or even the development of the student’s own voice, therefore referencing was not an issue.

The very concept of referencing, the reasons for it, as well as the actual techniques or mechanisms of it are very complex. The techniques of referencing are a means of lending clarity to the mixing and combining of different texts and voices. This is a complex process, the mastering of which entails practise, modelling and learning through trial and error. Angelil-Carter talks of plagiarism as ‘a “naturalized” concept which seems unquestioned by those who enforce its discipline. Citation is also a “naturalized” skill, so central to academic writing that much of its complexity is never made explicit’ (2000:2). It is the concept and reasons that need to be understood before the techniques are learnt. And, in this regard it is often the institution and not the student that is at fault.

McGowan claims that, ‘By focusing on rules and strategies for avoiding plagiarism, but ignoring the basic reasons for these requirements, we have put the cart before the horse’ (2005:287). She advocates as a first step of induction into academe, the development of ‘an appreciation of the culture of enquiry’, thus encouraging a positive goal – of gaining ‘a new

approach to learning’, rather than a negative one – of avoidance of committing the crime of plagiarism.

The issue of referencing is a central aspect of the students’ transitions and ‘becoming’ at the university. ‘It is through knowing when and how to reference that students demonstrate their ability to integrate, in their writing, the knowledge they have gained from their reading with their own ideas’ (Hendricks & Quinn, 2000:448). By correct citation we are applying identity to ourselves (in relation to others – authors or readers).

Pittam et al. comment that

Instructional interventions that consider students as writers and aim to promote authorial identity should, therefore, be informed by evidence about student beliefs and attitudes about authorship and authorial identity, as well as those associated with problematic approaches to writing. (2009:154)

By this they are referring to ‘analyses of cultural and institutional representations of authorship, sociocultural analyses of discourses of writing, textual analysis of student writing’ rather than ‘direct evidence about student beliefs and attitudes’.

Northedge, (2003b) talks of ‘the classic dilemma for students’ – where they can’t make sense of the new discourse because they do not have the necessary frames of reference within their repertoires. The best way of acquiring this is to participate in the discourse. However, this is often a tentative process, involving stumbles, mimicking and, in writing, hiding behind the words of others – using patchwriting (patching chunks of text from other authors together). Thompson and Pennycook believe that this is a useful stage in the development of students’ writing.

First we need to grasp the fact that all writing is intertextual. All authors, from university professors to first-year primary school aged children, always borrow and weave words and texts from elsewhere. The issue is to understand when such borrowing may have overstepped a line (what we have called transgressive intertextuality) and when it is part of a student’s development and learning. Patchwriting for example – when writers incorporate verbatim chunks of the texts of others in order to provide a scaffold or framework for the development of their own texts – may prove to be a useful strategy, particularly for writers who are at an early stage of development... Second, we need to see writing as dialogical – both in terms of students in dialogue with other texts and in terms of our need to dialogue with students. It is only through dialogue that we can understand their textual worlds.

(Thompson & Pennycook, 2008:21)

Angelil-Carter refers to Bartholomae, who wrote

Of students having to ‘invent the university’ every time they write, in that students are expected to write in the discourses of the disciplines before they are legitimate speakers of the language of the discipline. The result is that they invariably simply have to imitate the discourses of the

disciplines until such time as they have actually learned to write them, until such time as they are no longer ‘imposters’, and are no longer ‘inventing’.

(2000:41-42)

This invention often yields mishaps. Angelil-Carter relates the perception of the academic writer (on the part of the novice) as being a ‘disinterested displayer of factual knowledge’; the manipulations or rhetorical devices for persuasion (our academic argument) are not easily visible (or explainable!). She points out, that it is not the facts that speak for themselves in an argument; it is the use of rhetorical devices which serve to persuade:

The disguise of the author behind this ‘voiceless’ factual construction... is not easy: from a background of mainly expressive writing in English at school, and little writing in other subjects, the student launches into writing which is truly voiceless in an attempt at imitating a neutral stance. The result is that the stance of the writer to the ‘facts’ presented is not discernible, and there is no authorial presence animating the words.

(2000:42)

A Narrative approach to understanding

Narrative analysis is also a theoretical framework for my research. My readings (and interests) have taken me into the area of the practice of narrative therapy and healing. This is dealing with the stories we tell about ourselves. Arthur Frank (1995) speaks of ‘The wounded story teller’, where he distinguishes 3 types of narratives that ill people tell about their illnesses and themselves⁹. Although Frank made no specific mention of narrative theory or narrative analysis, his ideas fall within the school of narrative psychology – with the idea that the narrative told by the wounded person gives indications as to their relationship with their illness (and healing) and thus of their sense of agency within their healing. This dissertation looks at attitudes towards learning along similar lines.

Frank (1995) claims that stories do more than describe the self, but are ‘the self’s medium of being’. The essential recognition in narrative theory is that stories are a way of making sense. Polkinghorne explains that ‘narrative structure is a way to arrive at an understanding of the self as a whole; our actions and experiences gain meaning through their relationship to one another, as well as their relationship to general themes or plots’ (in Schiffrin, 1996:169). Our telling of our narratives relates the sense we have made of our experiences. Furthermore, the stories we tell ourselves determine our actions and attitudes – for example, in what we do as a

⁹ **The Restitution story:** ‘yesterday I was healthy, today I am sick, tomorrow I will be healthy again’ (Frank, 1995:77). Here, the individual is preparing for a future after the illness (Frank, 1995:93). The active player is the remedy (the drug or doctor). **The Chaos story:** the plot is that life does not get better. Stories are chaotic in their absence of narrative order (Frank, 1995:97). Here, events are told without sequence or discernible causality. Chaos stories give up on the ending (Frank, 1995:98). **The Quest narrative:** where the individual meets suffering head-on; accepts the illness and seeks to use it (Frank, 1995:115). The illness is the occasion of a journey that becomes a quest (Frank, 1995:115). There is a belief that something is to be gained through the experience – this type of narrative ‘affords the ill person a voice as teller of her own story, because only in quest stories does the teller have a story to tell’ (Frank, 1995:115). The individual is a responsible moral agent whose primary action is witness (Frank, 1995:134).

learner – whether we learn, what we learn, what we believe about our learning and its outcomes. McAdams (in Crossley, 2000) explains that we do not ‘discover’ ourselves in narrative, but we make or create ourselves through narrative. In a similar vein, Wortham writes that ‘while telling their stories autobiographical narrators often *enact* a characteristic type of self, and through such performances they may in part become that type of self’ (2000:4). From conversations with friends, both therapists and teachers, I am aware that many of them have seen the frustrating aspect of this statement – where real agency is disabled by negative stories about the self (albeit an ‘agent’; even in this) and the self’s abilities. In my descriptive analysis, I relate some such disabling stories that students tended to believe about their selves, for example, in terms of having ‘inferior knowledge’, or not being academics or writers. However, I believe there can be positive results from students’ telling of their narratives – for example, in the very practice of academic writing, which by nature, should sound positive and assertive, and could therefore increase the confidence of the practising learner-writer.

The practice of narrative therapy, which is based on narrative theory, focuses on the telling and retelling of stories as a process of deconstruction and renegotiation of meanings, including understandings of self. This process allows for the idea of *migrating identities*: as stories change in their retelling, so do perspectives; the generation of new stories enables individuals to perform new meanings. Narrative therapists work at taking apart or deconstructing the beliefs, ideas and practices of the person’s environment that support the problem and the problem story. In separating from these dominant ideas, new possibilities for challenging the problem, and for preferred stories, are opened up. My journal exercise attempted to do this – in a sense – providing space for students to ‘become’.

Wojecki discusses Ricouer’s concept of ‘narrative identity’, which sees individuals as storied beings, or the self as an unfolding story.

The self only comes into being or is constructed when the individual's story is being told. It is through storytelling, or narration, that one's identity is created and maintained. If the self or subject was known at the outset, then the narrator would know who they already are and there would be nothing more to understand: the existential search would be complete. Therefore, storytelling is the medium through which self-presentation (or identity) is constructed and maintained. (2007:173)

Of course, explaining ourselves to others is quite complex; ‘It depends on what *we* think *they* think we ought to be like – or what selves in general ought to be like’ (Bruner, 2004:4).

Like New Literacy Studies, narrative theory pays heed to the socio-cultural context of the meanings constructed; ‘Narratives are a means by which individuals translate knowing into telling (White, 1987). Focusing on the importance of the context and the audience for the performance of a narrative acts as a reminder that our ‘self-narratives’ must be supported or at least tolerated by those around us’ (Elliott, 2005:127). In fact, contexts and people around us can strengthen these stories or lead them into alternate stories. An easy example is the institutional and cultural beliefs about what constitutes a good learner or writer, or an intelligent or knowledgeable person (someone who can recount the words or lessons of others verbatim –versus– someone who can critique and debate convincingly). The context has an impact on, and is impacted by issues such as the quoting of authorities, talking in class, arguing issues, accepting issues – and these criteria differ in how they are regarded from institution to institution (school to university or workplace to academe). As Morgan points out, ‘the beliefs, ideas and practices of the culture in which we live play a large part in the meanings we make of our lives’ (2000:10).

Bruner explains that we need to tell stories in order to elucidate what we mean by ‘self’,

In effect, there is no such thing as an intuitively obvious and essential self to know, one that just sits there ready to be portrayed in words. Rather, we constantly construct and reconstruct ourselves to meet the needs of the situations we encounter, and we do so with the guidance of our memories of the past and our hopes and fears for the future. Telling oneself about oneself is like making up a story about who and what we are, what’s happened, and why we’re doing what we’re doing. (2004:4)

Writing, like stories, helps structure – it is a means of making sense (and redrafting has the same effect as retelling – through practise further meaning is made; the de- and re-construction in drafting, like that of narrative therapeutic practice, can help in new ways of seeing). Biesta et al. (2008) claim that opportunities for narrating one’s life story are forms of identity work, involving internal conversations and social practices of story-telling. I think that the dialogical journal exercise was also a form of identity work; it involved reflections and practise at expressing the self in writing. Baynham claims that, ‘narrative as a genre is a particularly rich research site for evidence of how participants engage in ‘identity work’, constructing perspectives, ideologies, and values on their literacy practices and those of others’ (2001:99-100).

I have borrowed from narrative theory the notion of *migrating identities* in the title of my thesis. Narrative therapy mediates the migration of identities through a process of deconstructing and renegotiating. Within this theory, I argue that stories learners (and their

educators) tell themselves influence practices and experiences. Smith and Winslade (1997), both narrative therapists, reported on their study of young men 'migrating from alcohol's regime'. Using a 'migration of identity' metaphor, these authors found five common themes in the therapeutic stories of young men's migrations of identity as they emerged from their alcoholic lifestyles into new ways of being in the world. Their themes, which are interrelated and not sequential, entail: deconstructing alcohol's place in one's relations with others, deconstructing the identity claims of alcohol, renegotiating the place of alcohol in one's life, renegotiating one's relationship with one's own experience once free from alcohol's domination, and renegotiating one's relations with others (Smith & Winslade, 1997). Whilst I am not implying any correlations between an alcoholic lifestyle and the previous literacy practices of many of the students in my study, I suggest that migrating identities for mature learners in academia can involve a similar set of themes in relation to (old and new) literacy practices. In other words, such migrations of identity within literacy practices could involve themes of deconstructions and reconstructions of the use of literacy in the learner's relationships with others (authors, readers, lecturers, peers) and the identity claims of literacy and relationships in their literacy and learning practices. I hope to illustrate this in the discussion of my findings.

Self-image is an important motivator in learning. Self-concept is formed through experiences but also determines experiences; we feel more secure doing things which fit our self-concept. Thus, often people become totally accepting of their feelings of inadequacy (Lawrence, 2000). The idea of self as narrative can, in fact, enable or disable agency: the stories determine or play into ideas of what 'I' am allowed to become. This begs research exploring what stories our learners tell themselves as learners and how these influence their practices and experiences.

Wojecki, who focuses on vocational education of adult workers, uses the concept of 'wounding learning practices', which refers to previous learning experiences (within formal schooling environments) of adult learners which are 'internalised, held onto (and re-storied) later in life, significantly impacting upon their identity construction as learners' (2005:1). In other words, their abilities in, and perceived benefits of, learning, or lacks thereof, are renarrated, thus impacting on their current identity constructions as learners, and possibly shaping future such constructions. He refers to 'the narrative construction of identity' in learners, whereby their self stories are put together for themselves and others. He proposes

that the agency of a learner – or their engagement in their learning – is shaped by their previous experiences and stories of learning that they have constructed about themselves. For these reasons, he claims that it is important for educator researchers to pay attention to learner identities, and the stories learners tell about themselves; ‘In doing so, narrative views on identity invite adult educators to conceptualise how learner identities are assembled, maintained, or transformed through the stories adult learners tell’ (Wojecki, 2007:172).

Attention to language is considered essential in the narrative theoretical framework. Sclater writes:

For many, the need for a ‘narrative psychology’ arises in order to take account of the ‘turn to language’ in social science. ...Traditionally, language is seen merely as a means of representation and communication – a transparent medium by which ‘reality’ is reflected and conveyed in a meaningful way. From this perspective, meanings are given in language and are, more or less, self evident in any given community where the language is shared. By contrast, a critical approach challenges this mimetic view of language and problematises the production of meaning. It sees language, not as reflecting experience, but as constitutive of both experience and subjectivity. It sees meaning as the outcome of ongoing processes of negotiation – always partial and contingent, never final or fixed. This view requires a specifically narrative psychology to frame a different view of the human subject as primarily a self-reflective meaning-maker. (2003:319)

This theory validates my research into students’ writing in academia – how students write and how they say what they do; language ‘speaks’ more than what it says. In other words, language is not a ‘transparent medium’ but is multi-layered, with multi-meanings, and is dependent for its utterances and meanings – made and taken – on factors in its environment, the context, actors, relationships, and so on. The student writer is dependent on language to construct not just their meaning, but their self as a meaning maker (for their self and others, such as lecturers or readers) and as a person becoming or a becoming self. Reissman states

Narrators can position themselves, for example, as victims of one circumstance or another in their tales, giving over to other characters the power to initiate action, not themselves. Alternatively, narrators can position themselves as agentic beings that assume control over events and actions: they purposefully initiate and cause action. They can shift among positions, giving themselves agentic roles in certain scenes, and passive roles in others. To create these fluid semantic spaces for themselves, narrators use particular grammatical resources to construct who they are – verbs, for example, that frame actions as voluntary rather than compulsory, or grammatical forms that intensify vulnerability (Capps & Ochs, 1995). These positionings of the self in personal narratives signify the performance of identity. (2000:12-13)

It is useful to consider the impact of discourses and practices in academe from a narrative theoretical stance: ‘In any field of knowledge or professional practice, certain stories develop and come to hold sway for a time through building themselves into the accepted

ways of speaking in that field' (Smith & Winslade, 1997). In referring to vocabulary in relation to counselling around addiction, these authors explain how such language can serve to position certain persons in deficit terms and others in positions of superiority. It is not hard to carry their point over to the field of higher education. Consider, for example, the following terms and their socially hierarchical implications at the institution: '*English Second Language*' (i.e. English is 'the' prime language), '*disadvantaged*' (i.e. nothing of the 'disadvantaged' subject counts), '*mature student*' (may imply wisdom but in this context carries connotations of being rigid, not-young, dogged). These emit to a kind of thinking which features backwardness, developmental gaps and a not-quite-normal. In fact, many such terms focus on what is lacking, rather than what is there.

My research is partly an attempt to deconstruct the impact of discourses and ways of thinking about such students (for themselves as well). As Sfard and Prusak (2005) explain, individuals will often automatically and unquestioningly endorse particular stories about themselves without realizing that they are simply 'stories' and that others are possible.

In Chapter 3, I discuss theory around the practices of dialogical journaling and illustrate some experiences of the practice as a pedagogical tool in my class – from myself and the students.

Chapter 3

Dialogical Journals and Reflective Functioning

This chapter serves as further background to my study. Here, I briefly discuss theory around journaling and reflection in learning. Following on this I offer some anecdotal experiences of reading groups that were established, and of the dialogical journaling exercise, by way of insight into the perceived usefulness of the journals to students in their development as learners. In describing students' use of reading groups and their journals, I illustrate the communities of practice that existed within the class environment.

I have mentioned the concurrent family and professional demands of students in my class, which often renders the process of their learning an isolated and isolating one. Tinto (1997a; 1997b) strongly advocates the creation of learning communities within the classroom, especially for students who have multiple obligations outside the institution. For those who are working full time and studying part time, the classroom is probably the only place where they may meet with their teaching staff or even with other students. Tinto suggests that the increased levels of involvement enabled by such learning communities, yield higher levels of learning gain. Furthermore, Brockbank and McGill (1998) assert that if institutions of higher education are to move beyond the transmissional (approach to knowledge), to the transformative, it is essential to recognize that social relationships are a fundamental aspect of learning. In addition, Brockbank and McGill (1998) claim that the ability to become a critical learner (one who questions and explores the ideas they come across) requires the ability to reflect (on knowledge, feelings and actions), and that, whilst the ability to reflect alone is necessary, it is not sufficient. Along with New Literacy theorists, these authors see knowledge as being socially constructed and meaning as being created in relation to others. Therefore, reflection and the creation of meaning must be a social process. They advocate situations where teachers and learners can actively reflect on issues and materials, together, in dialogue. Through this, they believe some form of critical reflective learning can take place, where the learner 'begins the journey to greater agency, autonomy and independence rather than remaining dependent and passive' (Brockbank & McGill, 1998:54).

A sense of community within the class environment

A 'community of practice' is a concept developed by Lave and Wenger (1991) and refers to a group of people with a common interest, who share information and experiences with each other in order to learn and develop themselves within the common interest. Wenger (2006:np) later refers to this as 'a process of collective learning in a shared domain of human endeavour'. This learning through participation in the group is referred to by Lave and Wenger (1991) as 'situated learning'.

Canagarajah states, 'The notion of situated learning in education has recently made us aware that learning anything is a community activity, done in engagement with the circles that practise that knowledge' (2002:30). Whilst the class as a whole was one community of practice in my course, there were various smaller communities of practice in the form of social groupings, reading groups, and dialogical journal relationships. The social ones were usually along cultural/racial groupings, for example, the students who were from Botswana and at this institution full time, and staying in residence, spent a lot of time together, both in and outside class, and a group of local part-time coloured women grouped themselves together in their time on campus. Reading groups, which were encouraged by myself, tended to be smaller groupings of the established social groups in the first semester; in the second semester, I grouped them according to the similarities of their chosen Literature Review topics. These, together with journal partnerships, between students and with ourselves as conveners of the course, all served as potential change agents.

Talking of his social systems view on learning, Wenger notes,

The focus on the social aspect of learning is not a displacement of the person. On the contrary, it is an emphasis on the person as a social participant, as a meaning-making entity for whom the social world is a resource for constituting an identity. This meaning-making person is not just a cognitive entity. It is a whole person, with a body, a heart, a brain, relationships, aspirations, all the aspects of human experience, all involved in the negotiation of meaning. The experience of the person in all these aspects is actively constituted, shaped, and interpreted through learning. Learning is not just acquiring skills and information; it is becoming a certain person—a knower in a context where what it means to know is negotiated with respect to the regime of competence of a community. (2012:2)

He continues to explain that 'Learning entails realignment. When a newcomer is entering a community, it is mostly the competence that is pulling the experience along, until the learner's experience reflects the competence of the community'

(2012:2). This is reflective of my notion of migrating identities, as the learner enters and settles into this community of practice.

I think many of the students in my study initially saw learning as an individual activity rather than a social one. The idea of learning as a social activity had to be promoted through theory and practice. Most felt they had benefited greatly in their learning and development from the relationships formed and activated during their time here. Many of these students claimed that their discussions and small group sharing helped them with better understandings of the readings. For example, Thato¹ wrote that his love of learning was promoted by the ‘community’ approach here; it promoted a desire to acquire more, rather than a fear that work might be difficult. He said that it made him feel that, ‘everything is very possible in this world of learning’.

Journals for the promotion of reflective practice

Journals have been used for a variety of reasons in higher education and professional training. Usually the objective is some form of reflective action. They may be used as a counselling strategy (Burnett & Meacham 2002), or as a means of recording events, simply for personal reflection, or for use in more formal assignments. They could be written to be read by the learners themselves, or the teacher or by others. Students’ journals could be simply read, or responded to, or be corrected or assessed (which raises questions as to what criteria or rubric would be used). My method was one of dialogical journals – written between the student, a partner and myself. These entries were intended as a discursive communication between the partners, with myself involved as a third ‘discussant’, so entries were written to be read and responded to by another student and/or myself; they were not corrected or assessed. The intention was essentially to promote reflection and communication of ideas.

‘Reflective practice’ (as opposed to ‘reflective writing’) is now a familiar concept in many of the practising professions, such as counselling, social work, nursing and teaching. The reflective journal is often used in the training of health care professionals (Kerka, 1996; Kember et al., 1999; Brockbank & McGill, 1998), and practising student teachers (Burton et al., 2009; Garmon, 2001), for reflecting on their

¹ I have used pseudonyms to cover students’ identities

practice. Brockbank and McGill (1998) assert that reflective practice enables learners 'to become more conscious of their own approaches to their learning and thereby promote critically reflective learning via reflection on their practice and learning about their learning' (1998:73). They regard reflective practice as a core feature of critically reflective learning.

Attention to reflective activities in education is relatively new. It appears to have accompanied the shift from the idea of learning as a product, where knowledge is to be consumed, to that of learning as a process, where knowledge is constructed. McDury and Alterio (2002), in their book, *Learning through Storytelling in Higher Education*, talk of the growth in attention to the role of reflection in education and observe that students in a wide range of disciplines are now being encouraged to learn about themselves and the content of their courses by engaging in reflective activities. McDury and Alterio (2002) relate a variety of understandings of what 'reflective learning' involves. These range from seeing it as an internal examination and exploration of an issue of concern which has been triggered by an experience, resulting in a changed conceptual perspective, through seeing it as the exploration of experiences, to come to new understandings, to the engage in proactive initiatives within learning contexts (as opposed to passive contemplation). These have in common involvement of the self in addition to, or rather than, the teacher, and the fact that the consequence of the reflection for the student is a changed conceptual understanding. However, a precise academic definition of the concept appears to be difficult. According to Moon (1999, in McDury & Alterio, 2002:21), this is due to 'the haphazard proliferation of thought (knowledge and speculation) which surrounds reflection'. Such development is natural in a new area of attention; however, as Moon (ibid) points out, this creates difficulties in investigating the concept from a theoretical perspective or in applying it to a new domain of activity.

Both Kemmis (1985, in McDury & Alterio, 2002) and Fisher (2003) speak of reflective activity being linked to three types of thinking: technical, practical and critical. The technical is concerned with the efficiency and effectiveness of the means to achieve certain ends. The practical allows for examination of goals and the assumptions on which they are based, and recognizes that meanings are negotiated through language. Critical reflection adds moral and ethical criteria such as equity and

justice, locating analysis of personal action within wider historical, political and social contexts' (Fisher, 2003:314). Kemmis refers to the critical as 'the most complex level, [which] takes a dialectic approach by addressing the social and historical contexts in relation to an event' (in McDury & Alterio, 2002:22). McDury and Alterio (2002) continue to explain Kemmis's notion of reflection as one of 'metathinking', as it can potentially send us into further thought and sometimes, action.

Kember et al. (1999) also point out that formal definitions of the concept of 'reflection' are not easy to find; this despite what they refer to as the 'cult status of reflection'. They state that the construct has become widely used and is applied in diverse contexts and within different philosophical frameworks. They attempted a means of measuring the depth of reflective thinking in students' reflective journals. They did so because they claimed that programmes often claimed their main aim was to develop a reflective practitioner, but had no means of assessing the actual reflective thinking that their students engaged in. They focus on Mezirow's (1992) interpretation of reflection as 'validity testing'. According to Mezirow,

Reflection involves the critique of assumptions about the content or process of problem solving... The critique of premises or presuppositions pertains to problem posing as distinct from problem solving. Problem posing involves making a taken-for-granted situation problematic, raising questions regarding its validity.

(in Kember et al., 1999:22-23)

Fisher explains Mezirow's theory of critical reflection as a critique of the assumptions on which our beliefs are based. It is through challenging assumptions that we have taken for granted that we come to new insights and new meaning perspectives. 'According to Mezirow, such assumptions may be *epistemic* (related to the nature and use of knowledge), *socio-cultural* (belief systems that pertain to power and social relationships), or *psychic* (pertaining to individual psychological processes)' (Fisher, 2003:315). In Kember et al.'s (1999) measuring, they attempted to code levels of reflective thinking in students' journals based on Mezirow's categories of reflective and non-reflective action. Mezirow distinguished three levels of non-reflective action: habitual action (that which is performed automatically as a result of previous learning and frequent use), thoughtful action (that which has become routine and is therefore not reflected upon) and introspection (that which acknowledges feelings or thoughts about ourselves, but does not reflect or examine further). He sub-divides reflective thinking into the categories of content reflection (reflection on our perceptions,

thoughts, feelings and actions), process reflection (on how we perceive, think, feel or act) and premise reflection (redefining a problem so that action can be redirected).

Based on other theorists' notions of reflection, (such as Schön, 1983, 1987, and Mezirow, 1990), Fisher (2003) offers some important indicators of a capacity for critical reflection in the social sciences. These include the ability to articulate a contextual awareness of one's own position, to identify one's values, beliefs and assumptions, to consider alternative perspectives, to perceive inconsistencies in one's own views and to imagine other possibilities.

Such academic demands assume highly, or rather, *specifically* developed cognitive functioning. Critical reflection is a process that is often part of what has to be taken on for the first time by students in the process of their migration to the academic context and its discourses. In this context journals have been used as a means of nurturing reflective awareness, sometimes in the form of an individual exercise and sometimes as a responsive one. Although journal writing is seen as a means of developing reflective thinking (Langer, 2002), on its own it runs the risk of merely eliciting descriptive writing from students, rather than reflective writing. Bain et al. (2002) point out that the value of journal writing as a learning technique is questioned when there have been disappointing outcomes in research on journal writing, as many students begin their journal writing at the lower end of the scale (that is, non-reflective and descriptive writing) and fail to reach the higher levels (of metacognitive processes such as critical reasoning), despite the best efforts of their educators and curricula designed specifically to produce reflective practitioners.

Reflective writing involves looking at and thinking about content (of a subject). It gives students the right to speak, but although it enables them to shape their thoughts, this process requires guidance in its development. It is also important to consider how reflective writing and reflective thinking are understood by the individuals involved. Bain et al. (2002) for instance, found differences amongst their students in terms of whether they saw reflective writing as a record (where their thoughts are put on paper), as a motivator (where they think about what they have written), or as an extension of reflective thinking (where their thoughts can be unjumbled or sorted).

Garmon (2001) distinguishes between dialogue journals, in which the student and teacher conduct a private written conversation for an extended period of time, and reflective (or response) journals, where the students reflect on course materials by themselves and occasionally get feedback from the teacher. There is also the diary type, whereby the students keep a log of their experiences, which is regarded as personal, but upon which they may be asked to reflect in some sort of essay towards the end of the course. The problem here is that in this diary type of dialogical journal, the student writer, whilst reflecting on their own experiences, is still doing it in isolation and cannot develop a sense of the social aspect of meaning making or of writing: that in writing, one is communicating with another person, and this isolation serves to limit their reflections, whereas new ‘eyes’ or ‘ears’ can enhance the richness and potential of reflection. As Clifford (2002) cautions, although journals are a vehicle for exploring personalized knowledge, there is a need to move beyond this and be part of a collaborative learning activity.

While strong claims have been made for journals promoting reflection, it is evident that this reflective activity does need to be explicitly taught, as a number of researchers have pointed out (cf. Street, 1990, who provides some guidance in this; Bain et al., 2002; Newton, 2004; Russell, 2005). Russell confirms from his own experience that it is possible to teach reflective practice and, in fact, concludes that it should be taught ‘explicitly, directly, thoughtfully and patiently’ (2005:203). Research has shown that the development of self-reflective critical thinking is enhanced with modelling, guidance and formal instruction from a teacher, for example, through one-on-one interface and dialogical journal writing (Langer, 2002; Garmon, 1998; Peyton & Staton, 1993). Bain et al. (2002) claim that, in order for the journal to serve as a tool for learning, the role of the teacher-responder is still crucial: as a modeller (of skills in language and in dialogue), prompter of thought and reflection, and as an encouraging and engaging reader, the provision and quality of a teacher’s feedback is an important consideration. In the conclusion of their research, Bain et al. found feedback focusing on the level of reflection attained (rather than that focused on teaching issues) to be most effective;

Such feedback, combined with issue-related questions and comments designed to challenge the student and encourage consideration of alternative perspectives, would appear to offer the most effective strategy for enhancing the effectiveness of journal writing as a learning tool. (2002:171)

These authors claim that the provision of feedback is an effective strategy in moving students to more higher-order reflective and cognitive activities in their writing. Their research confirmed for them that written feedback on journal entries was seen by students 'as prompting them to think in more depth about what they have written, to look at issues or incidents in a different way and to think about aspects of their learning experiences they had not previously considered' (2002:173). However, I found that in my own experience this took some time to develop; it was a long and intense process. It was only towards the end of the year that these sorts of aspects were visible in students' journal writing and reflective essays, as I show in my analysis in Chapter 7.

According to Peyton,

The teacher or writing partner should enter into the journal interaction as a good conversationalist, an interesting writer, an engaged listener, and a colleague. The goal is to be responsive to topics and concerns, to ask questions, to introduce topics, and to write about oneself. Teacher entries that simply echo what the learner wrote or that ask a lot of questions can stifle rather than promote interaction. (2000:np)

In terms of reflective functioning, Garmon (2001) reports that writing the journal apparently helped his (teachers in training) students remember their course material and to engage with and think more deeply about it. It promoted greater self-reflection and understanding, both of which led to better understandings and new insights into their course material and themselves. It also helped them to think about their roles as prospective teachers, and provided the opportunity for students to express their ideas (in other words, a coming of voice). He adds that they enjoyed the feedback they received on their ideas, and that the journal writing improved teacher-student relationships. He also mentions that 'students felt that not having to worry about grammar and mechanics in their journal facilitated their writing' (2001:48). Generally, journals are seen as less threatening than formal written assignments, and are therefore safe places for practising writing, without the restrictions of form, audience and evaluation (Kerka, 1996). They are also a less threatening means for learners to 'talk' in a way that they might not in class, according to Kerka (1996), who states that journal writing enables thoughts to become 'visible and concrete'. This permits interaction, elaboration and expansion of ideas. Through the exercise of journal writing students get to relate their experiences, ideas and feelings. These

narratives form stories about themselves, which contribute to the construction of a sense of identity within their learning environment.

The dialogical journal, usually written between a learner and an educator, either in free-written entries or with journal prompts, is used as a means of building on reflections. Here,

The teacher responds to the learners' comments, doubts, questions, and complaints as one person to another. In his or her responses, the teacher naturally demonstrates how people use language to ask questions, to agree or disagree, to explain a point, to offer a compliment or encouragement, and so on. But the teacher's agenda in responding is not to teach the language. ...[and] does not control the direction of the journals [but]...is guided by the learners' agendas. ...In the process, both writers become teacher and learner. (Hudleston, 1993:xiv)

Mirhosseini (2009) explains that in the dialogical journaling exercise, 'initial decisions about topics, length, style, format and so on are made by learners' (2009:42).

Journal writing is different from academic writing; for example, the 'voice' in journals is more personal – almost confessing, whilst 'voice' in academic writing is bold, opinionated and structured, with evidence, fact and surety. While development in the course of journal writing does not directly translate into good formal academic writing, research has pointed to the value of journal writing in terms of development of learning, self-awareness and metacognitive strategies essential to higher education, such as voicing of agency, reflection, critical thinking and writing skills, and the linking of theory and practice. According to Boden et al., 'the journal provided a safe environment for students to develop writing, critical thinking, and reflection skills.' (2006:12). In addition, improvements in problem-solving mechanisms (Fulwiler, 1989; Dart et al., 1998; Bain et al., 2002; Ghahremani-Ghajar & Mirhosseini, 2005; Mirhosseini, 2009), fluency in writing and language and the facilitation of interaction between students and their teachers (Peyton & Staton, 1993; Peyton, 2000; Bain et al., 2002; Burnett & Meacham, 2002; Ghahremani-Ghajar & Mirhosseini, 2005; Ulsoğlu-Dorn, 2008; Alterio, 2004; Mirhosseini, 2009), and socialising learners into the academic discourse and institutional culture have also been attributed to regular journal writing (Kerka, 1996; 2002; Ghahremani-Ghajar & Mirhosseini, 2005; Alterio, 2004).

The benefits, use and nature of journals differ according to their intended purpose and the learning and teaching circumstances. O'Connell and Dymont (2011:48) list benefits of reflective journals they have gleaned from literature, which they characterize in terms of four themes: providing data 'as a starting point for learning' (whereby learners can record their observations of what is happening around them), serving to centre learners in the learning process (where the learners, their experience and their interpretations of their experience, are the focus, thus making the learning 'more deliberate'; the learner controls the depth and direction of their learning), promoting creativity in learning (the learners can express themselves in their own way), and encouraging critical thinking (whereby metacognition or 'thinking about thinking' is fostered). The learner may be encouraged to think about their learning or to think about their professional process. O'Connell and Dymont (2011) also list some benefits for instructors of reflective journaling, which include better relationships with students. My experience was that the journaling exercise created better relationships in the class environment as a whole; students certainly supported each other closely, in both personal and learning issues.

Peyton and Staton (1993) talk of the usefulness of dialogical journals to teachers of students learning English as an additional language; apart from opening a new channel of communication, they provide an added context for language and literacy development. They explain that dialogical journaling gives students the opportunity to use English in a non-threatening atmosphere, and that it 'provides a natural, comfortable bridge to other kinds of writing'. Peyton and Staton (1993) continue to outline further benefits of dialogical journals: they enable extended contact between students and teachers in terms of time and individual attention, they facilitate the management of diversity in classes, for example, in terms of language, ability, and interest levels as the journals elicit continuous feedback in terms of understandings, progress and needs, they provide optimal language learning conditions, focussing as they do on real issues of interest to the student and on meaning rather than form. In addition, the authors claim, 'the teacher's writing also provides continual exposure to the thought, style, and manner of expression of a proficient English writer' (Peyton & Staton, 1993:4).

Peyton used dialogic journals with foreign students in the US whose home language was not English. She claims that one-to-one communication is crucial, not only to help the students to adjust, but also to help the teacher understand the students and address their particular language and literacy needs. She states, ‘because the interaction is written, it allows students to use reading and writing in purposeful ways and provides a natural, comfortable bridge to other kinds of writing’ (2000:np).

Ulusoglu-Darn (2008) used journal writing in teaching Turkish students, who as a result of their product-oriented educational backgrounds, had complained that they could not write and were unpractised at expressing their thoughts and feelings on a topic. He claims that journal writing allows learners to express their feelings and ideas in a non-threatening context (and one in which they are not evaluated) and that this exercise enables the development of learners’ confidence both in themselves and their writing ability and can encourage learners to take responsibility for their learning. Reinertsen and Wells (1993) attempted to use dialogue journals in their course to develop students’ abilities in critical analysis. They found that the journal writing improved students’ confidence in their writing as well as in their abilities to create meaning through their writing.

Mirhosseini used the exercise to help his Iranian students learn to write in English:

DJW² is a very flexible and potentially rich educational practice, can be employed for teaching at almost all EFL³ proficiency levels and in almost all educational contexts. DJW creates the possibility of an integrative approach to writing that may involve lower-level linguistic and stylistic concerns of a product-focused view and cognitive and communicative considerations of process orientations, as well as the social, critical and personal concerns of a post-process perspective. The valuable feature of DJW is that it allows teachers to focus on any of these aspects at any given time without losing sight of writing as a whole. (2009:42-43)

The most common drawback reported with regards to writing, reading and responding to journals is the issue of time (Peyton & Staton, 1993; Garmon, 2001; O’Connell & Dymont, 2011). However, generally, teachers report that the time is well spent and the gains in terms of what they learn about their students make it worthwhile (Peyton & Staton, 1993). O’Connell and Dymont (2011) list some of the challenges of journal writing, which include the fact that there exists a lack of training or structure

² Dialogical journal writing.

³ English as a foreign language.

provided to the students, that students might write for the instructor rather than reflect on their own experience, students might have negative perceptions of journaling, journals do not 'work' for all students, there are gender differences in how journals are used and managed (with ethical concerns; assessment issues; legal considerations; time requirements; and quality of reflection), women generally having more positive attitudes towards journaling and keeping more regular journals than men do, and men primarily using journals to record events and facts while women using journals to express thoughts and emotions. (While I have not measured this in my study here, this was my inkling as well.)

Technology can enable more prompt responses, if students are appropriately technologically literate. This brings in new considerations, perhaps beyond the scope of this thesis. A number of researchers have focussed on the effect of 'mediated communication' on the portrayal of oneself or the construction of one's identity. For example, Grodin and Lindlof pose the question, 'Does cyberspace allow for an experience of self in relationships that is not available to us in nonmediated forms?' (1996:3). The argument being that mediated communication enables different possible adoptions of social representations of the self, and, in turn, a 'decenteredness of self'. Turkle (in Grodin & Lindloff, 1996) looks at the construction of self through virtual reality: how identity is shaped through these relationships, how people use these relationships to 'play with self-identity and to 'try out' new identities'. In fact, I think journals allow this even in written form. For example, I am aware that students often 'spoke' to me in written entries, in ways they would not have, at least, at first, in face-to-face interactions.

My method of dialogical journaling

My prime motivation for using dialogical journals was as an educational tool, to create an opportunity for reflection and dialogue within a learning community, and to promote agency and engagement in learning. I regard the 'dialogical' nature of the journal writing as referring to the active engagement between the writers and readers in the journal partnerships, in constructing meaning and understanding (knowledge) for themselves through the written entries.

Simply put, dialogical journaling entails journal entries written between authors, thus providing for an audience who respond to the written performance. However, almost all dialogue journals in literature have been between teacher and learner. Few used them as a dialogic exercise between peers. I believe that keeping dialogical journals only between the teacher and learner maintains the hierarchical nature of authority between the teacher and the learner and still does not sufficiently promote in students the sense of writing (and reading) as a social activity and something that can be shared and as providing an opportunity to promote improved understandings between equals. It keeps the teacher as 'leader' and the learner as the led, despite Hudleson's (1993) claims (of a relationship between equals). So, rather than employing the hierarchical nature of the teacher-learner relationship, I endeavoured a wider version of the dialogical journal, whereby students, from the beginning, were required to write to each other and to myself, as in a three-way (and sometimes more) conversation. I used this exercise in order to encourage students to become consciously aware of the communicative and sense-making purpose of writing, and through this, I aimed to change students' attitudes towards their writing and about themselves as writers, and to develop the concept of a real and interested audience with whom they could share ideas. I did this through the use of weekly journal prompts based on our course readings, which students were asked to address in their journal entries, and thus I hoped to encourage a practice of engaging with texts in writing, and with others in debate, around ideas they came across and their own ideas. Students were also allowed and encouraged to raise issues of their own in their entries, preferably in addition to a response to the prompt.

Whereas Garmon (2001) felt journaling helped his students to reflect on their roles as prospective teachers, based on my observations, I believe that the exercise helped my students think about their roles as learners, as writers and, to an extent, as educators themselves. Although teaching is a practise based profession, these students were not doing a practise based course (that is, they were not practicing their profession as part of the course).

Lawrence (2000) noted the importance of students being valued and given opportunities to talk about themselves – what he calls 'self-esteem enhancement' – whilst being tutored in literacy skills. Self-concept is formed through experiences but

also determines experiences (we feel more secure doing things which fit our self-concept). He says often people become totally accepting of their feelings of inadequacy. 'At first, most students are likely to have low self-esteem so their motivation to practise will be low and they will be content to wait until the next session before making any more effort to learn. Many of them will have learnt from past experience that the teacher does the work! This is another reason why it is essential that tutors help these students change their self-concepts' (Lawrence, 2000:7). He claims that such 'self-esteem enhancement' will speed up progress in learning together with improved self-concepts – which will in turn improve motivation and capacity to learn and to remember what has been learnt.

My aims for the journal writing exercise were to give students practise in writing, to promote reflection by the students on their readings, lectures, discussions, relevant experiences and ideas, and to encourage a community of practice with each other and myself. In this process I hoped to enable students to 'speak', and to develop their voices in the new (discourse) community, in other words to promote in them a discursive identity. I believe that the connection of writers and readers in the class embeds the idea of writing as a social activity, with writers coming to expect a responsive audience to what they write; in other words, a live reader. Thus, teaching or encouraging the development of such a literacy, although a long process in itself, would help to develop students' identities as critical (academic) thinkers, readers and writers. Due to the fact that we needed to respond to 35-40 pieces of writing timeously each week, our responses were fairly brief; however, we tried to ensure that the responses were engaging so that the students felt heard or attended to, and thus encouraging in terms of building confidence in the students as writers and learners, drawing them out by asking for opinions, clarifications, explanations, elaborations, and explorations in writing. In our responses we also tried to encourage students to write, to express and to recognise the value of their own ideas and experiences, and to engage more with their reading. We tried to ensure that our responses were friendly, so that we were seen not as judgemental authorities, but more as mentors in their induction into the academic world.

Most of the students did not speak English as their first language and most of them therefore needed practise and confidence at writing in English. Rather than being

academic, the writing in journals was more relaxed than formal assignments in terms of linguistic requirements. Students were given the option to write to each other in their own language, which some took up, but due to my own language constraints, I could only respond in English and to the limits of which I was able to understand what they had written in their chosen language. Bongi had much more flexibility in her multilingual capacities.

It feels important to emphasise that the writing required in journals (which I describe as a reflective literacy) is a different genre to the academic writing expected or required in formal assignments. I was using the journals to help students find and use their voices as writers – specifically asking for their own reflections on various texts – in what I hoped was a non-threatening context. My use of students' journal writing was a means of facilitating students' exploration of ideas and construction of meaning within their texts, as well as a way of developing their ability to give expression to these processes. The journal writing is not seen by us as a means of mastering subject content, but rather as one of developing learning skills. The aim of the dialogical and reflective writing exercises in our course is thus to promote practise in writing, and expressing one's thoughts in writing, to promote reflection by the students on their readings, lectures, discussions, relevant experiences and ideas, and to connect the students with each other and myself, and thus to promote students' confidence in their learning. I believe that once the learner has become more practices at (and therefore, hopefully, more confident in) expressing their thoughts in writing, in reflecting while writing and in sharing their ideas and reflections with others through their writing, the actual formal academic writing skills would be easier for them to pick up.

The experience of working with reading groups

The idea of a reading group was new to most of the students and so some took a while to be persuaded to form reading groups. However, of those who did, many mentioned that working with their reading groups provided support in the process of reading and understanding their readings, and was useful for translating concepts from their readings and that discussion in their own language really helped. Those who met regularly with their reading groups benefitted in all sorts of ways: their senses of self, their taking on of agency in their learning and their writing, their confidences,

understanding of their readings, and enjoyment of learning. For example, Phumla came to find that peer assistance played ‘a vital role’ in her reading, writing and learning. Ritsie found that the group discussions helped her become more aware of what she was going to write, which made the writing on her own easier. Students began to go together in their groups to get to know the library and ask for help from the Humanities Information desk, in addition to going to the computer laboratory to learn about the technological side of things. Zukisani relates discussing the literature review with his group mates and them all going to the library together to search for information. Sibahle loved the experience of working together and finding and discussing their readings. She said it was as if they were ‘actually researching’. She also felt that reading and commenting on each other’s writing was giving each of them more confidence. Dino wrote that working with a group improved his social relationships and his understanding of other students. Through the group meetings, he gained the confidence to ask his colleagues for assistance with both academic and social issues. This was a big shift for him.

In the first semester, students grouped themselves according to social or cultural similarities or to acquaintances. In an early entry, Lendy wrote that with her group of five, they used to work together in the reading room every Friday afternoon. She found this a fruitful exercise as they were able to unpack both tasks and readings together. They also felt more confident to ask for help as a group from the librarians or myself. She also used the journal space to request (as a group) that us lecturers not waste their time by talking about irrelevant things and that we be more upfront about what we want them to do and focus on what is needed and not what is not.

In the second semester they were grouped by me according to similarities in terms of the topics they had chosen for their Literature Review (LR) assignment. In this context they shared their experiences of searching for information and finding readings. Some read the same readings and discussed them together in their groups. Some students said that they depended on their group discussion of the readings in order to understand them. Ravi explained that her reading group activities acted as a supportive tool in coping with the readings, going through them paragraph by paragraph and then having a discussion about the sections, and then the reading as a whole. These discussions helped the readings to become interesting and enjoyable for

the members of the group. Her partner wrote that the first time, they dealt with one article, all of them were struggling to understand it so they looked up some of the words in the dictionary and substituted some alternative words in the sentences in the text to try to understand the sentences. This sometimes meant working together for two or three hours to negotiate the content and argument of the article. However, she felt that group discussions promoted their understandings of the readings as well as critical thinking, and, as has been noted, that discussing the readings in groups made them more interesting and enjoyable. She claimed that she found the readings very difficult at first, but it was a great help when she joined a reading group, and as a result, she began to take an interest in what the readings were discussing and enjoyed the group discussions about them. Later, in preparing for the literature review assignment, she explains her procedure: as a group they chose readings, which they critically discussed. Often this was done in a process of switching between English and Setswana, but there was one Xhosa speaking member of the group so they had to be sensitive to this. After discussing the readings, as a group they would do a mind-map together for their assignment, after which, each of them would go and write their own drafts. They had intended to share their drafts with each other, but were under time pressure with other additional assignments.

Zimasa wrote that she sometimes relied on the group discussions in order to understand a reading. Her group also first discussed all the concepts in Setswana and later translated them into English, and she commented that it was much easier to understand in their own language. Her partner, Mpho, agreed, saying that this procedure bonded them together as a group and they would often take their discussions to their residences and continue them over supper together. (This was an advantage for the Setswana students who were all full time and in residence together.)

We always meet and discuss what was taught in class and this really worked for me. In our group when one does not understand, the one who understand explains the concepts in the language that all will benefit from and be encouraged to read the lecture notes as well as the readings. We encourage one another to also read so that he/she will also make some contributions. Sometimes we assign each member a topic to research on and make the group presentation. This has really helped me as it has built my confidence and understanding of what we have learnt so far. (Mpho:RE)⁴

Mpho also claimed that group discussions helped her to ‘find her way out’ (clarify things). It was good for her to find that she wasn’t the only person experiencing

⁴ RE: Reflective essay. My coding is explained in my methodology in Chapter 4.

difficulties in understanding readings or topics covered in class and her group proved to be a great support for overcoming these difficulties. Meeting with her peer group really helped in getting her started with her literature review. She adds that she became so confident that she was able to help some of her classmates with their writing even though they were doing different topics. She advocated group work to her partner, especially for the sharing of ideas and for the advice from each other on how to improve their writing. Being able to discuss the readings in her mother tongue made Mpho feel satisfied that she had learnt a lot and this helped her, when she read further, in thinking critically (being able to reflect and interrogate) on what she had read. She wrote that she really enjoyed the exercise of sharing their drafts and building their final drafts on the feedback from each other. She had learnt a great deal from this. At one point she commented that she felt her assignment was good and that she liked the way she presented her argument on the readings.

The experience of dialogical journals

Theoretically speaking, my intention had been to move students from cognitively undemanding and context embedded writing (that is, writing in an everyday discursive manner) towards the more cognitively demanding and context reduced style required of academic essay writing. However, moving students from one style of thinking and writing to another is not a simple matter. Furthermore, although I had hoped for journal writing to be a means of reflecting in preparation for, and to enhance, students' formal written assignments, their level of such writing and reflection started at an earlier (academically developmental) stage than expected of postgraduate students. In other words, whilst reflective literacy (and reflective writing and ultimately, critical thinking) was what I aimed to develop here, it is not where students began in their development of academic literacy.

As mentioned, through the dialogical journaling exercise I hoped to encourage a community of practice. In other words, a sense of the group having a common interest, within which they were able to share their ideas and experiences and thus develop and learn from each other. I also hoped to draw out their 'voices' and ideas incrementally and in a less threatening mode, without the constraints of formal academic written discourse. I believed that this would make it easier for them to

approach formal academic writing; once a sense of self was initiated. Whilst I foresaw this journal writing as less threatening than formal academic writing, I came to realise that it was not always initially experienced as less threatening, and that it had challenges of its own. For example, many students were not used to being asked to open themselves up to teachers or peers, or even to give their own opinions on ideas, and as a result, were slower to relax into the exercise than I had anticipated.

Whilst the objective of the journals was to prompt deeper thinking, built up through the exercises during the year, I realise that students needed to learn how to use the journals in the writing of entries, and indeed, how to regard and use the responses to entries and feedback on ideas in entries, drafts or essay writing; much depended on a build-up of trust for their responder (whether myself or a classmate) and often on a change in attitude towards the nature of learning itself and an insight into how they learnt, and towards feedback – seeing it as something constructive and welcomed, rather than having negative connotations. This was a long and intense process.

Reflective writing, like other academic literacy skills, takes time to evolve. Aside from expected issues related to language, discourse (academic and disciplinary) and writing, it was evident that being asked to share their reflections, both on their own practices and on their course readings, was a new expectation for most of the students. In other words, reflective and critical thinking were further aspects of the new Discourses that they had to adapt to. Their entries on the readings tended, at first, to consist of basic summaries rather than reflections, and they clearly had no practise in expressing critical thought in writing, or in seeing themselves as an ‘authority’ worthy of expressing or ‘voicing’ their opinions, especially in English. This fact relates directly to issues around questionings of authority, debate and argumentation, related possibly to their cultural socialisation, or socially constructed perspectives and experiences on the allowances provided by their identities within the institution or community of practice that they found themselves. It was also clear that questioning, especially with teachers, had not often been a formally recognized part of their learning or cultural/social environments. It took some time for most of them to respond to our written prompts in response to their journal entries.

In addition, whilst most students entered the journal writing exercise with enthusiasm, they took a fair time to actually respond to each other's journal entries, or to engage with each other over their readings and learnings. At first, they were quite nervous about writing to each other; perhaps ambivalent about how to respond and who the response was actually to be written for (self, partner, myself or an unknown other). At first their responses generally consisted of grammatical corrections and an occasional judgemental or pedantic sentence on what their peer had written. It was as if their writing is considered personal and sacred; a 'teacher' can comment on it, but a 'fellow student' or peer cannot taint or judge it. A sense of dialogue in journals is not easy and not always evident. This dialogue in journals also comes in many forms – that with reader/audience, with the text, with the self, with the partner, and with some unknown space.

Journals did, in fact, play multiple roles, often away from those intended. As evident in the literature, many boundaries were broken in terms of formal academic relationships between us as lecturers and students. This breaking down of traditional academic boundaries entailed us being addressed as teachers, therapists, friends, instructors, advisors, motivators, sounding boards and providers of a variety of other course revisions. Having said this, however, in the process of their journal writing through the course, I observed changes or transitions in students' ways of thinking, their views of knowledge, and their shifting discursive identities: as students came to new understandings around them through telling stories (narratives) and engaging in their journals, they gained confidence in their abilities to engage with the meaning making process of the academic institution. In reading their journals, I observed changes in their relationships to their learning - from learning being seen as a distant phenomenon in which they are unengaged, towards learning becoming a part of themselves, in which they are directly engaged. In other words, as students become confident in the academic discourse, with its related ways of using language, thinking, valuing and behaving, for example, in creating 'arguments', providing 'evidence', referring to 'authorities' and developing 'agency', so their identities become newly constituted. This is what I regard as migrations of identities.

As a result of my observations, I believe that these journal writing exercises, when they came to be taken seriously or were written by committed dialogue-ers, helped

them to focus on their academic work and feel attended to and helped in terms of building on their ideas, stimulating further thought, information and networking, as well as providing practise writing about their ideas, planning, outlining and brainstorming.

The general *dialogical* path of development in the journaling

Most students tended to partner with others from the same cultural and language background, and usually others of the same sex. It seems that when partnerships did occasionally occur across different backgrounds, the journal entries were more engaging with each other – written discussions went beyond the set texts and the partners seemed to learn from each other. For example, Khubani, a Xhosa man, who was reserved, partnered with Sue, a confident English woman, who had a lot to say. In her journal, she was very engaging which appeared to draw him out. They set up a whole coding system with their journals and responses. Their journal relationship yielded much discussion over their readings, their experiences and their cultural and teaching environments. Whilst some journal pairs stuck to focussing on the readings, (usually, at first summarising the reading and later in the course, actually discussing it), other journal pairs got to know each other through the journal exchanges.

As they relaxed into the exercise, there appeared to be more praise given to each other for their efforts and achievements in their studies and life. This, I am sure, was helpful in their becoming; their growing confidences and senses of self. Even such praise is an expression of voice; it is responding to what they have read and thus indicative of agency. Over time, journals tended to become streamlined, focusing on the literature review task and often ending as drafts towards the literature review itself, sometimes tapering off from the partner and simply sent to me, but at other times, forming an activity of peer-feedback.

The journal space was often one in which frustrations could be vented or pressures aired, and in many cases this seems to have provided relief in the airing and sharing and comfort in the sympathizing. Also, students were able through the journals to ask for and get clarification from each other and from ourselves on assignment tasks.

Students often spoke of themselves as outsiders in their journal entries, due to their differing cultures, academic acquaintance or personal statuses, such as their age, gender or being a part-time student. Sometimes, in their supposed dialogue with each other, there were subliminal messages to me, for example over what needs more explaining in class time, and there was also an awareness of me 'listening in'.

In the section that follows, I relate what students said the dialogical journaling exercise as a community of practice gave them. They do not necessarily speak about it in terms of improving their writing; I hope to indicate the visibility of what this journaling has done for them in my analysis chapters.

What students said about the dialogical journaling exercise

As O'Connell and Dymont (2011) mention, journaling is not for everyone. Some students did not appear to buy into the journal writing exercise and tended to write multiple entries at the end of the semester in order to fulfil the portfolio requirement – which, of course, meant that they did not take up the partnership aspect either, not bothering to await partner responses. However, in their final evaluations of the course, most students included working with a journal partner as one of the most rewarding aspects. With students who did not engage regularly or with conviction in the journaling exercise, it is not possible to track evidence of development in their selves or their writing across their entries. It is also unlikely that they wrote much about the experience. Nevertheless, on the whole, students who partook in regular journal entries claimed to have benefitted from the exercise. I outline some narrated extracts below.

The following comments are from (anonymous) course evaluations at the end of one semester:

- I enjoyed journal writing because I was free to discuss my problems and always looked forward to my tutors and journal partner's comments.
- It is a good kind of 'ice-breaker' and feelings can be shared in a non-foreboding way. It gives one an opportunity to express oneself in a non-classroom situation. A journal partner – mine anyway – 'pushes' me, encourages me.
- Journals encourage socialization and those exchanges were very important for establishing contact with our journal partners.
- Although I had to cross learning barriers, I was guided by lecturers and eventually started liking what I've been writing about.

Many students claimed that initially, they had not taken the journals seriously, but that they had come to see the purpose of the exercise. Vuyo related his confusion at the beginning of the course, where he did not understand what was expected of him in the journal writing and that he only realized later in the course that the purpose of the journal entries was, 'a starting point to practise writing'.

Writing of the journal was a very good exercise. People started to think about themselves. Who they are? How they have grown to where they were today. To look at their academic history was a very big challenge as this was to be directed to another student. This exercise was like drawing the river of life. (What has it been like to you to be who you are?). By so doing we were not aware that we *were* reviling (exposing) our inner world to the outside world. May be for the past twenty years nobody had ever asked me to reveal myself to me. So all those revelations have been suppressed and now they have been prompted a new self who is eager to learn and learn more has been born.
(Thato:RE1)

Students mentioned how the journal writing had helped in their understanding of the readings and in the development in their general writing and debating abilities. I did note, however, that these benefits were usually listed by students who had been consistent with regular weekly entries.

Other benefits of the journal writing as seen by the students are that they were inspiring and informative (reading each others' entries and reading over their own), that the journal writing improved their vocabulary, that they served to encourage and motivate journal partners to read more, and that they instilled a feeling of community, of company and support, and of belonging. Mpho, who, as mentioned, felt she gained much from partaking in a reading group, claimed the journaling with a partner kept her going:

The journals have helped me to share my fears and I got advised by my journal partner. This is good because a partner gives tips that help one to develop to a better person. The fact that one would have opened to somebody, it relieves one and gives courage to keep working hard. I don't think I would have made it to this far if I did not have a partner to share with and got encouraged. Every time I received a response from my partner and the lecturers, I got motivated to work hard. Through the journals I came to realize that as students we have some kind of similar problems and this makes one feel that she is not alone.
(Mpho:RE4)

Students also found journaling to be useful in that there was a sense of a real person reading their writing and responding to it. Mention was made of feeling free to discuss problems and share ideas in a non-threatening 'environment' and of looking forward to responses from journal partners and lecturers.

I really enjoyed reading your responses to my journal entries as well as the feedback on assignments. I'm amazed and I suppose it's human nature to want to know what people think of you and your abilities. I obviously enjoyed the positive comments and found them extremely useful and particularly encouraging because of the stage I was at in my development as a new student and writer. The suggestions I received gladly and tried to incorporate them in my future journal entries. (Sara:Dec)

The exercise provided comfort to Hettie in that having a journal partner gave her encouragement and support and helped her to 'grow into university studies'. Gugu claimed that the journals were a great help because it became easy for her to open up to her partner, that she learnt that she was not alone in the problems she experienced and that they helped each other to overcome their difficulties. Gugu wrote that her self-esteem had improved through the course and she now felt she could freely discuss with other students. In fact, through her journal entries, there is a notable change from relating what readings said to a more discursive engagement with her journal partner, with the inclusion of her own ideas and how ideas from the readings could relate to classroom situations she was familiar with. Marlon expressed relief at not being alone in the course. He wrote that his partner had held him 'accountable to the rigours and structures of studying at university', and this helped in overcoming the challenges of contextualising his readings for his working experience. Marlon was also grateful to his partner for his sharing of ideas and help with finding resources in the library, which was a great relief for him. Others wrote of the motivation provided by their partners:

It is good to have a journal partner who responds to my journals. He acts as a motivator and he is very inspirational when it comes to journal in the sense that he keeps asking when are you bringing your journal? (Yanga:3)⁵

He was always willing to reflect on my journals. With these reflections I was able to share ideas with my partner as at times we had differing views and understandings. (Vuyo:June)

Ravi wrote of the journals as a blessing because they helped in improving their writing and vocabulary. What also helped was that others experienced similar difficulties with reading and so they were not alone. She also felt that the journal entries helped her with the grasping of the readings; she wrote that she was motivated to read at least one reading per week so as to be able to relate to it in her journal. There was much written about how the journal exercise helped to motivate them

⁵ Numbers here indicate the journal entry number.

into the academic culture. This indicates a prompting of engagement with, and agency over, readings, writing and learning.

The writing of the journals helped me to engage with the readings. I can now engage in a debate. Writing of journals has developed me to an extent that I started writing a lot of letters to my friends, my family and parents. They were shocked because they knew me as a person who did not bother much on writing but resorted to landline phones and mobile phones. (Zukisani:RE)

Hettie also gained a sense of belonging in the academic culture through the exercise:

The journals prompted me into the culture of reading and writing. I had to read an article and later write some comments regarding the articles and also write how I felt about the article. My voice was very important when I was writing. By writing journals, I was motivated a lot and it encouraged me to think as I read and write. I became much more motivated and interested in writing as I began to write my essays. I was able to read, write and analyse texts. I also changed my attitude towards reading, because at first I disliked doing the readings. However, since I joined this course, reading has become a hobby to me. In readings I found that a person read to get information and it promotes critical thinking. (Hettie:10)

Jacky wrote a lot about her readings and in April wrote 'I am really enjoying writing about my readings and I am learning a lot! It is important to write for someone though. Thank you'. Zimasa wrote that journal writing was tough at the beginning but that most students came to enjoy it and that as a result students were interacting, communicating and helping each other in journal groups. She also wrote that through journals, she got exposed to the culture of reading and writing and she learnt about communicating her ideas. Yanga gained confidence:

I think development in my writing can be attributed to the journals my partner and I wrote. Through that exchange I got courage to write and I improved....Journals also played a role in developing me. They motivated and encouraged me to read, as I had to write them after reading. I would not just write a journal without reading the articles. The responses from both my partner and lecturers gave me encouragement as sometimes we would look at issues differently and focus widely on their subjects. Through these journals I have been prepared to fit in the academic culture and through the analysis I made I feel I am in the process to fit. (Yanga:RE)

A number of students wrote of how their journal partners helped them with their formal academic writing, through feedback on their drafts, reading each other's drafts, or gaining insights from what their partners had written in their journals. Funeka, having always written essays once-off, and never having shown her writing to anyone else, started to share drafts of her assignments with her journal partner.

My colleague responded and raised questions for me and gave it to me with some advice on the way of going about rewriting the assignment. She helped me a lot. From her response it showed me that I was out of context. When I got my draft back it was very easy for me to correct my errors and get going. (Funeka:CI,June)

In a later entry, she spoke of how her partner had helped her learn how to respond to a journal and how to engage with a reading when writing assignments. Although her entries are addressed to me rather than her partner, what she relates is evidence of dialogue around her formal writing. Khubani claimed that he had gained much from writing to his partner, firstly through the ability to ‘talk’⁶ to each other informally, unlike the writing of assignments. It was useful because he realised he could hear other views that he was not aware of, or may have overlooked from his partner. He also said that he sometimes imitated, or modelled, her way of writing which was helpful. He also enjoyed coming to understand his journal partner’s cultural background through these communications. Sara also seems to have imitated her partner’s writing. She noted that her partner’s writing had developed a great deal and she felt she had learnt from this (seeing her partner’s development) as well.

You may not be aware that I have picked out some of your ways of writing and also the views that you have raised in the journals. Your way of responding to issues is very objective. (Sara:7)

On a few occasions, Lutho also claimed to have gained help for his assignment from reading his partner’s entries. Athi claimed that journal writing helped in his academic writing and that it was a good way of interacting with others and exchanging ideas. All of these are evidence of dialogic development in their learning.

Journal partners often came to work together on their assignments:

Once I have selected my topic for research I think the two of us should sit down and discuss the information as I would value your critique and comments. Where constructive criticism is applied it can be quite beneficial and help to develop the academic researcher aspire to look at aspects more objectively. Meaningful contributions can be achieved through collaboration and the focus can become so much clearer for the researcher. (Pedro:8)

Towards the end of the first semester, Carma reflected on what she had learnt about her writing and learning process.

I have to admit that after the initial tentative writings in my journal, I became more bold. My big mistake was when I did not write down my thoughts as I went along. I should have made this a habit. I also failed to clearly explain or define concepts through writing. Words and sentences formulated in my mind and when I discussed concepts with my journal partner, I would do so. I asked my journal partner to go through my assignments and reflect on it. I wanted an honest opinion. She told me that ‘You are saying many things which are true, but there is no substance...’. This worried me. I made an appointment with my lecturer to discuss this. I really hope that my writing is going to improve and also my marks. (Carma:8)

⁶ Sometimes done in their mother tongue, which undoubtedly made communications easier.

The journal writing enabled students to reflect back on their development; for example, Khan reflected on the issue of feedback. He wrote that he had doubted his abilities in writing essays when he first came and that he felt the comment he received for his first essay, for which he got a mark of 50%, although negative, was fair because he had not done all the readings nor answered the question fully. He put more effort into his next assignment, making sure he had understood the readings, and was rewarded with a good grade. He wrote,

In my view feedback should always be seen as a reflection on your understanding and knowledge of your assignment. ...Comments that I personally dislike are those that contain a 'but' it creates an uneasy feeling. Your celebration of the good comment is tempered by the 'negative' comment that follows the 'but'. (Khan:August)

Journals were not without their difficulties; for example, they required commitment and time from both partners and a shared understanding of the purpose, the teamwork and sensitivities to (and skills in) feedback. Qagamba was frustrated at the lack of responses from her partner;

I wish my partner had time to look at my work, presume she would have been able to spot my erroneous referencing. (Qagamba:12)

Yonela was frustrated at the lack of engagement in her partner's entries, which did not serve to *respond* to her own.

Did you do a diploma in multilingualism? I'm not sure because you are really frustrating me by not responding in time regarding my journals. I think it's unfair on my side. (Yonela:5)

In an October entry, Maggi wrote that she had been through five journal partners as they tended to 'pull out' for various reasons; one had left the course, two stopped coming to lectures, another disappeared after approaching her to partner with him. In his reflection, Ayanda wrote that he did not know how his writing had developed as his journal partner had not been giving him regular feedback on his journal entries. His journal partner explained (to me) in his next entry that it was difficult to respond to these entries because Ayanda was not on email and so his responses would have to be right the first time he wrote them as he could not go back and change things as he went along. Kwandie came to tell me that she had had problems with her journal partner in the second semester because she took offence to Kwandie's comments on her draft in the journal, feeling that Kwandie was showing her up to me⁷. The

⁷ Obviously this was sometimes a problem – the triangle and the ubiquitous presence/gaze of the lecturer.

dialogical journal exercise also promoted anxiety in that partners made themselves vulnerable to each other in what they shared and how they wrote in terms of language or reflections on their understandings of lectures or readings.

I have walked around with the journal entries hanging over my head – not because they weren't done, but because they were so intensely personal. If truth be told, I have often thought of just writing 'bogus' entries that wouldn't take so much of myself and just writing short clips to get it over and done with. (Sue:July)

In other words, if the journal entries were approached with seriousness and commitment, they entailed risks in terms of felt intimacy. And, as Sue intimates, the risk of the exercise for us was that students could distance themselves from the endeavour.

Our voices as change agents

As Elliott (2005) points out, this material needs to be understood with the acknowledgement of the context in which it was produced. In the journals, my voice (and that of my colleague's) was meant to serve as part of the process of enabling both agency and dialogue. It needs to be borne in mind that we acted as *change agents*, for example, in order to encourage our students to engage with their readers, their readings and other peoples' ideas. Our feedback was often full of comments, prompts and questions, such as 'Why do you say this?', 'How do you know?', 'Where does this information come from?', or 'So what?', and we encouraged students to ask this of their own and each other's writing (and their readings). Wortham writes, 'Any autobiographical narrative involves a doubling of roles for the narrator's self – the narrator has at least one role in the represented content of the story and one role in the ongoing interaction between narrator and audience' (2001:13). This is true, in effect, of my position as well in 'narrating' my research, in which another role of myself was involved, that of educator, prompter and respondent to the material I am now using as data.

What follows is a brief explanation of the role of myself and my colleague, Bongi, as co-responders (in writing) to students' written journal entries. Obviously, as our aim was to encourage reflection and development in learning and writing, our prompts and responses were written with these intentions. As mentioned, potentially having to reply to entries from a whole class each week involved a large amount of work from us, so responses were short and rushed on occasion. With our questioning and

reflections on what they wrote, we hoped also to be modelling as well as mentoring. This attentiveness involved multiple roles and tasks or foci in terms of paying attention to or taking an attentive interest in their studies, their experiences, needs and support, confirming what they said or wrote (hearing their voices), advising, encouraging responsibility, agency and confidence, engaging in and with their ideas, prompting further ideas, reflecting back on previous ideas, clarifying confusions, addressing their questions, pointing them to resources or further readings, asking for feedback, for their opinions, affirming their ideas and efforts and acknowledging their loads, difficulties, stresses and achievements, as well as trying to bring their partner into the dialogue, encouraging networking with other students in the class, and encouraging a sense of community in their learning environment. Sometimes we suggested different ways of looking at issues or practices, for example, pointing out that the focus of peer reading of both drafts and journals could be more a sharing of ideas and strategies activity rather than one of assessing or correcting what was written. Below are some examples of such responses:

Some interesting thoughts on critical thinking. Are you saying that in order to qualify as a critical thinker you need to have expertise / knowledge in that area already? Is critical thinking not a way of gaining knowledge (exploring, clarifying, etc)? Maybe a distinction needs to be made between being critical and critical thinking?

(Response to Hettie:4)

I wonder if critical thinking really is about having a situation that requires a solution to it? Perhaps, rather a clear understanding or balanced reflection on it? I likened it to someone else, as being a judge in a court of law. You make a note of the arguments of each side – the different perspectives on an issue. And your ‘argument’ is a weighing up of these views.

(Response to Dino:4)

By the way, I am hoping for you to engage in written discussions in your journals around the course readings and lecture inputs. I would like you to hear each other’s views and take them further rather than judge each other’s entries. I want it to be an enjoyable exercise for both of you.

(Response to Pearl:1)

Maybe your challenge for yourself is in NOT suppressing your identity! You have mentioned the richness of experience and wisdom that you have as a mature student. See how the requirements of the course can *accommodate* your identity rather! Bring it into your writing – your reader would welcome it (and you might enjoy your writing more because there would be more of you in it!).

(Response to Yonela:4)

I like the way you have responded to your readings on theories of learning – it’s nice to hear your views on these theories. In fact, you are already ‘analysing’ the readings here! (Maybe you are more academic than you thought!)

(Response to Carma:2)

Due to the intimacy of the exercise, it bestowed a variety of roles on us, some potentially conflictual; that of teacher, mentor, writing consultant, counsellor, friend,

sounding board and, sometimes, punch bag. The fairly relaxed and informal nature of the exercise, and thus the relationship, meant that we were constantly disturbed in time and space. It appears that, as a result of this closeness, students felt more at ease in consulting us over their writing or other issues.

Summing up: The potential of journals

What students said about the exercise partly confirms my view that the journals, although informal, helped in the becoming of self and voice (as far as students believed). Their informality was an asset in drawing out voice, although formalising it into actual essay writing still had to happen. In a sense, journals provided both a platform from which to develop students' formal academic writing and a railing against which to support it in process. Through feeling safe to express themselves, and managing to do so, albeit informally, students became more confident at working out what they thought and wanted to say.

The journals enabled reflection on knowledge, feelings and actions which, as Brockbank and McGill (1998) claim, is essential to becoming a critical learner, and I would say this enabled a more known and secure or confident sense of self, and thus a stronger agency to emerge. More so, the 'reflective cycles' that evolved mean that meaning is created in relation to others and knowledge is socially constructed. For the practicing journal writers, their journal writing did serve as an 'ordering of their experience' (cf. Scott et al., 2002) within these 'reflective cycles'.

Journal writing is different from academic writing, but I believe that the exercise contributed to development of academic writing, certainly in terms of developed confidence, their ability to express themselves and their understanding of writing as a discursive tool. As is evident from some of the comments made by students in their entries, many of these students came to this learning situation with the idea that they brought little with them that was of use to the learning they were here to 'get'; as if what they brought was a deficit in or to their learning. On the contrary, with the attentiveness brought about through the journal exercise (with potential attentiveness from ourselves and their journal partners) and reading groups, a different message

was possible: that their life experience counts and is valuable to the (co-)construction of knowledge within their learning experience. Learning is contextual.

On reading the students' journals, I realized that they yielded a narrative of learning; a 'collective narrative' (Elliott, 2005), but the entries themselves each contained small stories the students were telling about themselves and this led me into reading about narrative psychology and narrative theory of identity. Narrative theory talks of 'migrating identities': as stories change – in their retelling, so do perspectives. Thus, in the narrative therapeutic approach, the solution lies in the identification or generation of alternative stories to enable individuals to perform new meanings. Although not officially regarded as a therapy, dialogical journaling seemed to do just this. My observations were that, as students came to new understandings through their narrations in their journals, so they gained confidence in their abilities to engage with the meaning making process of the academic institution.

What I learnt from the journals affected me and my teaching. In other words, the journals also served as an agent of change for me. The journals were of great benefit to me in that they enabled me; I learnt about the context of my students, what they were learning and how they were learning.

Dialogical Journals as Data

Initially the endeavour was not one that began with the intention of using it for formal research purposes. I used the exercise because I regarded it as a strategy that I believed to be beneficial for students' learning, and also as a form of action research – to inform my teaching practice for these students as I worked with them. It was only some time into the exercise that I decided to use it as research data. My decision to use the journals for further research purposes was based on two realisations. Firstly, there was the richness of information that the journals yielded. Secondly, whilst still convinced of its benefits, I found journaling was a very labour intensive and time consuming task – for myself and for the students - , and with large classes, is, in fact, not sustainable. Thus it made sense that I use the endeavour to better understand the *problem* so as to seek more sustainable solutions. Whilst for the most part, students who write in their journals appear to lend praise to the exercise, my purpose in this

thesis is not to advocate the use of journals, but rather to learn from them. In other words, my purpose here is to use the journals written by my students as a research tool for analysis; examining aspects of students' learning, so as to better understand what is involved in the taking on of agency, the becoming of voice, and the sense of self through the migrations of identity in the transition into the academic environment.

University of Cape Town

Chapter 4

Methodological Framework and Design

In this chapter, I first discuss some theory behind my method of analysis. I then describe and explain the methodology I have used in my research.

Methodological scaffolding

My analytical procedure consists of two levels of analysis: a ‘macro’, or surface analysis, using a Grounded theory approach, and a micro, or deeper analysis, using the theoretical frameworks of discourse analysis and narrative analysis. The macro level of my analysis consists of a general analysis across all portfolios, where I looked at the content of students’ journal entries, and, as the first layer of my analysis, I identified common themes that emerged in their chronicles. I followed this analysis with a deeper analysis, using the frameworks of discourse analysis and narrative analysis. This process involved analyses of how these themes are played out in terms of students’ positioning of their selves through language, use of voice and relationships in writing and agency taken on, together with a changing sense of self. I attempted to interpret what these elements tell about the construction of self and others. Through this I hope to offer a ‘metastory’ (Reissman, 1993) of migrations of identity towards an authorial identity, and of constructions of meaning by mature students coming to study at an institution of Higher Education.

Grounded theory was useful in that it helped to organize a large data set into both emerging themes and a set of hypotheses to be pursued. However, rather than aiming specifically to construct a theory, I wanted to come to an understanding of students’ transitions in terms of identity, voice and agency at the institution. Having deconstructed my data into a set of categories, I wished to reconstruct what I read from these categories into a closer understanding of the process through which change or transitions had occurred. Thus, with the data I had coded, I examined it using two lenses, discourse and narrative; two theoretical frameworks which also come with means of analysis, each of

which I make use of to a certain extent. The way in which I make use of each of these methods is explained in the latter part of this chapter.

The primary source of data in discourse analysis is the actual talk and text that is uttered or compiled. Discourse analysis looks at both how individuals produce discourse and at how they are products of discourse (Wells, 2011). Wells (2011) points out that, depending on the field in which it is used, discourse analysis can have different foci, for example, how sentences combine to form discourse (linguistics), how mental schemas are used to make sense of narrative (cognitive psychology), how discourse constructs reality (social psychology), or how discourse constitutes objects and subjects (post-structuralism). My focus could be regarded as primarily a social psychological one, where I examined how experiences and senses of self are constrained and constructed through discourse.

With narrative analysis, stories are the primary source of data, and the content, structure, performance or context of these stories is examined (Wells, 2011). According to Wells (2011), the ‘narrative turn’ in Social Science research is due to the limitations of research into human problems modeled on natural sciences. It developed from the ‘narrative knowledge’ relied upon in psychotherapy, where understandings of why people behave the way they do, are gained from the stories they tell of themselves. Wells defines a narrative as ‘a story of events placed in sequential order which conveys meaning to a particular audience’ (2011:5). In referring to my data, I am making use of a wide definition of ‘narrative’; believing that the journal entries are chronicles in themselves, whereby I asked students to write through the course about their experiences (past and current) of learning, reading, writing, as well as their opinions of what they read, wrote and learnt. In this examination, I make observations of how the ‘stories’ students told themselves constrained or constructed their senses of selves as learners and writers. These, in turn, affected both the voices they spoke or wrote with and the agency they adopted in their learning and writing. This is in line with Wojecki’s (2007a) proposition that the agency of a learner is shaped by their previous (learning) experiences and stories that a learner has constructed about their self. Creswell (2007) explains that narrative can

be a method as well as the phenomenon of study. As a method, it starts with the experiences relayed in the stories told by individuals. My analysis is partly narrative in nature, as I am studying what students have narrated about their experiences – their stories. Across my examination of narrative and discourse, is an analysis of reflective actions and migrating or transforming identities.

The temporal dimension is important at both the discourse and narrative levels of my analysis in that it enables me to note changes in writing across different entries through the course of the year. These give insights into the development of students in terms of types of thinking or reflective actions, constructions of meaning and identity transformations on the part of the students. In the sections below, I explain each of these research design methods.

Grounded theory

Grounded theory emerged about 50 years ago as a newly developed method of research by sociologists, Anselm Strauss and Barney Glaser. It is a qualitative research design and refers to a method of building theory through the process of research, rather than one of using a preconceived theory to frame the research. Theory is shaped through the process of a perusal of the material that is most interesting and relevant (Glaser, 2012; Creswell, 2007; Glaser & Strauss, 2006; Charmaz, in Smith et al., 1995b; Bailey, 1995; Davis, 1995). Glaser and Strauss claim, ‘In discovering theory, one generates conceptual categories or their properties from evidence; then the evidence from which the category emerged is used to illustrate the concept’ (2006:23). At some point, Glaser and Strauss became divided in their opinions on the detail of the method, with Strauss wanting to keep a systematic design and Glaser wanting to keep it more flexible, allowing for ‘discovery’ or emergence of the theory (Creswell, 2012). Later, Charmaz developed a social constructivist approach in terms of the design (Creswell, 2012; Thomas & James, 2008; Creswell, 2007), which focused on meanings ascribed by participants and therefore emphasized ‘the views, values, beliefs, feelings, assumptions and ideologies of individuals’ (Creswell, 2012; Creswell, 2007).

Glaser refers to Grounded theory as an alternative to the traditional hypothesis testing in scientific research, a methodology which did not fit well with research in Humanities and Social Sciences. He writes of his and Strauss's original Grounded theory (GT) methodology that one aspect of it was to stop hypothesis testing that was both irrelevant and drew on conjectural theory explanations by grand theorists – 'theoretical capitalists'. These irrelevant preconceived tests yielded the dictum that 'no preconceptions were allowed' (Creswell, 2012:1). Migliaccio and Melzer (2011) explain that Glaser and Strauss's intention with Grounded theory was, to understand 'what is going on', rather than to determine if data could fit into predetermined categories or theories.

In the Grounded theory approach, analytic codes and categories are developed from data, rather than from preconceived hypotheses (Charmaz, in Smith et al., 1995b). Glaser states that Grounded theory 'works by providing us with relevant predictions, explanations, interpretations and applications' (2012:1). It is usually used to study forms of process in people, such as how they deal with a terminal illness, or how they undergo the process of learning. A process is understood as 'a sequence of actions and interactions among people and events pertaining to a topic' (Creswell, 2012:431). According to Morse,

The key to Grounded theory is that psychosocial process is discoverable. This 'process' is not simply the temporal linking of day-to-day events to construct the Grounded theory itself. The theory that emerges is not obvious and doing Grounded theory is not easy, simple or fast. Rather, it is the processes of analysis, the strategies and techniques of coding, categorizing, and re-categorizing, that place data in a form that enables the discovery of the [psycho/social process being investigated]. (2001:5)

The method of Grounded theory can be a messy process as it involves revisiting initial potential codes or categories and sometimes discarding, merging, dividing or redefining initial groupings. However, it is in these re-visitations that the theory becomes *grounded*; in this process, although potentially messy, the researcher becomes closely acquainted with their data. Creswell states,

As a systematic process, Grounded theory exhibits the rigor quantitative researchers like to see in an educational study. As part of this process, Grounded theory has features that contain a self-correcting nature. Based on analyzing one set of data, the researcher obtains direction from the analysis for the next set of data (Charmaz, 2000). Also, in data analysis, the researcher builds categories systematically from incident to incident and from incident to category. In this way, the researcher stays close to the data at all times in the analysis. (2012:423)

Neff points out that Grounded theory is time consuming and ‘produces so much data that physically managing them and intellectually manipulating them is difficult even with software programs for assistance’ (1998:125). She also mentions that this design ‘requires a questioning stance up to the end of a research project and beyond. Those applying the methodology must learn to live without closure’ (Neff, 1998:126).

Grounded theory is essentially a means of coding, through which conceptual categories are developed in order to ‘summarize, synthesize, and sort the observations that derive from the data’ (Migliaccio & Melzer, 2011:83). It consists of a series of steps, which include ‘open coding’, ‘axial coding’ and ‘selective coding’. During open coding, the data is coded for its major categories of information. These categories can contain subcategories, relating to different properties of the main category. During axial coding, the researcher identifies a ‘core’ phenomenon: one open coding category on which to focus and around which other categories are identified. These may consist of causal conditions, strategies, contextual conditions and consequences related to the core phenomenon. During selective coding, the researcher develops hypotheses that interrelate the categories, and assembles a story describing the interrelationships of the categories, or connecting the categories (Creswell, 2012; Creswell, 2007). Neff explains that,

During selective coding, the researcher refines and develops provisional category relations until the core category is firmly established and other categories are placed in relationship to it. Then the researcher explicates the story line of the core category by further validating causal conditions, contexts, intervening conditions, interactions, and consequences surrounding the phenomenon. In other words, the researcher now delineates a ‘grounded’ theory about a particular event, process, or social practice by writing the story of the event and showing it graphically. (2002:139)

Some Grounded theory researchers may then develop a visual model based on the ‘story line’. In the process of coding at all levels, the researcher ‘memos’: makes notes of ideas about their observations of the categories, their relationships and what is going on (Migliaccio & Melzer, 2011; Creswell, 2007).

In a critique of Grounded theory, Thomas and James traced various changes in, or diverse understandings of, it. In their article, they set out to ‘dispute Grounded theory’s status as theory, and the assertion that it can be ‘discovered’; we contest its claim to be consistent

with the tenets of qualitative inquiry, and we question its claims to produce better predictive and explanatory outcomes than other methods' (2006:768). They relate to other critiques of Grounded theory, which generally center around three themes:

First, that Grounded theory oversimplifies complex meanings and interrelationships in data; second, that it constrains analysis, putting the cart (procedure) before the horse (interpretation); and third that it depends upon inappropriate models of induction and asserts from them equally inappropriate claims to explanation and prediction.

(Thomas & James, 2006:768)

In addition to the critiques they related from others, these authors themselves pose questions as to the nature of 'theory', what is expected of theory and how this Grounded theory method for making sense can actually be called a theory. They point out that the concept 'theory' has a variety of meanings, both 'loose and tight', attached to it. They ask, 'Why should grounded theorists want, in 'discovering' something, to call that which is discovered 'theory'?' (2006:771). Their point is that Grounded theory does not provide *explanations*; it simply provides *understanding* – which, although a worthwhile outcome, is not theory. They claim that the belief that theory is essential to qualitative and ethnographic endeavor needs to be re-examined and that the distinction between 'inspiration/patterning versus explanation/prediction' needs to be clear. They continue to argue that the problem here is the tendency to link theory with inductive reasoning:

Interpretations of the kind made in Grounded theory research offer, on their own, no inference tickets – they enable no prediction or explanation, or at least no better prediction or explanation than any of us would make on the basis of our many years of experience of being human. What such interpretations offer is merely a narrative. But the point is not to be apologetic about narrative in social analysis. Narrative can be argued to offer more in the way of enlightenment than putative theory, while forsaking its epistemic pretensions. By saying it is merely a narrative, we are saying that it is not a narrative and something else: rather, it is a narrative and nothing else.

(Thomas & James, 2006:778)

Thomas and James (2006) are not against Grounded theory; they concede it is a valuable method of research. However, they caution about the aims and claims that Grounded Theorists have made about the method as one of theory creating.

I acknowledge that there is some tension involved in seeking to be open to exploration and recognition, whilst clearly approaching this research study from particular theoretical and ideological positions, such as those encompassed in New Literacy Studies. Obviously my interest in the study was borne out of my theoretical orientations. However, within

this, my analysis began as an open exploration. Grounded theory was useful to me as an initial means of dealing with my data, but rather than a general theory, I wanted a deeper understanding of students' development and experiences. Having coded the data, I needed to analyse the codes. My categories did appear as an oversimplification of the 'complex meanings and interrelationships in the data' (Thomas & James, 2006:768), so I used further analytical lenses of discourse analysis and narrative analysis. In other words, I used Grounded theory as a method for sorting my data for further analysis, rather than one for finding theory from it. In examining my clusters of categories for an understanding of how 'voice' is transformed in the development of an authorial identity in the academic institution and of transformations that occur whilst developing new ways of constructing knowledge at the institution, I found it useful using the lenses of discourse analysis and, to an extent, of narrative analysis. Studying transformations requires a narrative logic and attention to the discourses involved.

Discourse analysis

From the orientation to discursive practice, and the discourse analytic approach used in the chapters following this one, I draw on the work of Gee, Fairclough, Kalman, Northedge, Wortham and Bakhtin.

Gee's oft-quoted definition of Discourse (with a capital D) is that of the combination and integration of 'language, actions, interactions, ways of thinking, believing, valuing, and using various symbols, tools, and objects to enact a particular sort of socially recognizable identity' (Gee, 2005:21). Each of these can be investigated, even in writing. Parker comments, 'The advantage of discourse analysis is that it reframes the object, an individual's psychology, and allows us to treat it not as truth, but as one 'truth' held in place by language and power' (1992:22). He also explains that 'the variability of discourse rests on conflicts over meanings and uses of language' (Parker, 1992:126). Fairclough (2003) adds that each instance of communication is simultaneously a text, an instance of discursive practice and an instance of social practice. Thus, an understanding of what is behind what is written and how and why it is written would give insights into constructions of identity and social relations. Fairclough writes:

My approach to discourse analysis (a version of ‘critical discourse analysis’) is based upon the assumption that language is an irreducible part of social life, dialectically interconnected with other elements of social life, so that social analysis and research always has to take account of language. ... This is not a matter of reducing social life to language, saying that everything is discourse – it isn’t. Rather, it’s one analytical strategy amongst many, and it often makes sense to use discourse analysis in conjunction with other forms of analysis, for instance ethnography or forms of institutional analysis. (2006:2)

There are many versions of discourse analysis. Fairclough distinguishes between approaches which include detailed analyses of texts (what he calls ‘textually oriented discourse analysis’) and those which do not (generally inspired by social theory). In his own approach, he claims he has tried to transcend this division, thus focusing on both the language of texts and social theoretical issues. He claims this is not an ‘either/or’ issue;

On the one hand, any analysis of texts which aims to be significant in social scientific terms has to connect with theoretical questions about discourse (e.g. the socially ‘constructive’ effects of discourse). On the other hand, no real understanding of the social effects of discourse is possible without looking closely at what happens when people talk or write. (Fairclough, 2006:3)

There is also a wide variety of possibilities for analysis in Discourse studies. Fairclough (1992) offers critical guidance in this regard in his outlining of four important aspects for a method of discourse analysis to be useful: it needs to enable *multidimensional analysis*, where relationships within and between texts, interactions and contexts are studied, *multifunctional analysis*, where corresponding changes in discourse practices, knowledge, social relations and identities are examined, *historical analysis*, which entails two levels of focus: ‘articulatory’ processes in the construction of texts, and in the constitution of ‘orders of discourse’. It also needs to be a *critical method*; in other words, the connections and causes need to be made visible – this is because ‘relationships between discursive, social and cultural change are typically not transparent for the people involved’ (Fairclough, 1992:9).

Kalman’s (1999) study is a good example of the richness of this sort of research analysis. In her study of mediated literacy practices amongst scribes and clients in Mexico, Kalman (1999) focused on what the scribes did, what they said as they did it (reflections and mediations with the client) and their reflections on reading and writing after completion of their documents. In her analysis, she unpacks the primary social influences

on moment-to-moment composing activities of the documents written by the scribes for the clients. In doing so, she developed and employed a framework consisting of five elements, which I summarize below:

- alignment – situating the document via the self, evident in concerns such as who the document is for, why they need it, what their relationship is with the person receiving it, their previous experiences with this person, the situations in which they will use it,
- identity – situating the self via the document, evident in concerns such as what the document says about themselves, what evaluations will be made about them based on the writing,
- social consequences – anticipating reactions; what will happen to the self as a result of the writing (and in deciding what to write and how to write it),
- purposes – defining intentions: having an idea of how the writer plans to use the document and what they hope to accomplish with it, and
- rules of written language – adhering to conventions; having an idea of how it should look and how things should be said.

She also traces how scribes and clients simultaneously occupy multiple worlds of practice. These include the world of the immediate social interaction between scribe and client, the world within which the writing will function, the world of text-making, and the larger social world that forever impinges on the tasks and purposes at hand. She shows how forces from these different worlds interact to influence the processes and products of text-making. In her discussion she describes the positioning and repositioning of the scribes and their clients during their exchanges. She explains that this occurs as a result of how the participants construct their relationship with each other as well as their own position in the world. The tensions within these positionings affect choices in both form and function of what is written in the document. These choices are based on the five elements she found.

Kalman's (1999) ideas seem pertinent to bear in mind in my study, with 'worlds of practice' including combinations of home, work and the academic institution, the repositioning of relationships between writers and readers (journal partners, peers and

ourselves, and possibly others) and the interactions through journals, reading groups and class debates, as well as draft feedback and discussions, and formal essay-for-assessment writing.

As I have mentioned, discourse analysis yields much in terms of indications of positioning and identity and social interactions. There are various means of exploring these, for example, Northedge (2003a) distinguished between three common types of discourse along a number of axes. I find these are best summed up in the table below, in which I have merged two of Northedge's tables in his article, 'Rethinking teaching in the context of diversity' (2003a).

	Everyday discourses	Professional discourses	Academic discourses
Mode	Tribal	Institutional/functional	Rational/analytical
Key goals/functions	- reproduction of social order: public and local level	- delivery of services - reproduction of institutions of professional delivery	- analysis/criticism - theory building / research - reproduction of the academy
Character of discourse	Ideological/ coercive/ opportunistic <i>Present 1 side, don't question, dramatic – You magazine</i>	Bureaucratic/ hierarchical/ pragmatic presentational <i>Policy docs - type</i>	Literate/ textual - literal meanings - logical analysis - <i>Multifaceted/sided</i>
'Voice'	Personal	Institutional	Objective/ analytical
Attitude to the 'taken-for-granted'	Pressure to see things as obvious/ normal/ natural – because they are communally accepted	Pressure to see things as obvious/ normal/ natural – because they are institutionally established <i>Just listen, question only if you don't follow instructions</i>	Nothing taken for granted - all must be questioned: deconstruction of the obvious/ normal/ natural - all views justified: by argument and evidence
Attitude to debate	- assume agreement with listener (i.e. no need for debate) - denigrate other views and their holders - Debate = crisis	- operational agreement is required - debate permitted only under controlled conditions with 'proper' authority in charge	- debate ('Argument') is essential - disagreement welcomed/required

Adapted from Northedge (2003a)

The students in my course had to adapt to academic discourse from their everyday and professional discourses. The majority of them came from the Education profession – either as school teachers, school managers or school administrators.

Wortham (2001) looked at the oscillation between passive and active voices, through marking the ‘types of narrated self’ that he found in autobiographical narratives. This identification of ‘types of narrated self’ may be a useful means of distinguishing Northedge’s (2003a) character and voice of discourse. It is important to note that Wortham was talking about narratives in the pure sense. However, it is possible to conceive of this distinction in students’ journal and essay writing.

In addition, Wortham (2001) discusses Bakhtin’s concepts of ‘ventriloquation’, ‘voicing’, ‘indexing’, (un)finalizability’ and ‘double voicing’ – all of which are evident in my students’ writing and would be relevant to an examination of how (and why) things are said. Through *ventriloquation*, authors position themselves by ‘juxtaposing and speaking through others’ voices’ (Wortham, 2001:67). In terms of *voicing* and *indexing*, the way in which words are used index social positions because these words are known to be used by members of a certain group. Double voiced discourse ‘has a two-fold direction – it is directed both toward the referential object of speech, as in ordinary discourse, and toward *another’s discourse*, toward *someone else’s speech*’ (Bakhtin, in Wortham, 2001:64). Wortham continues, ‘In double-voiced discourse the speaker’s meaning emerges in part through an interaction with the voice of another, with both voices often speaking through one character’s words’ (2001:64). He brings in another concept of Bakhtin’s, the ‘celebration of unfinalizability’ and fear of it, or the need for ‘finalizability’. For example, in academic writing, when students have become academically ‘skilled’ they are able to pose questions in their writing, or leave their essays in a questionable form – which, I imagine, entails the full acknowledgement or acceptance of a dialogical relationship in their writing.

In his discussion of voicing and indexing, Wortham (2001:70) lists five types of cues that narrators use to index voices and to position themselves with respect to those voices, as summarized below:

‘Reference and predication’, which entails the picking out and characterization of things in the world through speech.

- ‘Metapragmatic descriptors’, the ‘verbs of saying’ – which enable voicing and ventriloquation.
- ‘Quotation’, which refers to various ways of relating someone else’s words.
- ‘Evaluative indexicals’ – stereotypically, certain utterances are associated with certain types of people by members of every speech community. These could be in the form of lexical items, accents, grammatical constructions and other aspects of utterances.
- ‘Epistemic modalization’ – where a narrated event is placed out of space and time. This can be done through specific use of grammar and tenses, for example, in ‘once upon a time’.

Often students in my class struggled to acquire metapragmatic descriptors – for example, ‘*X says/muses/insists/offers...*’. In this regard, they usually ask for lists of possibilities and seldom distinguish differences in meaning. In terms of quotation, initially, generally, these students seldom put ideas from their readings into their own words. An example of perceived evaluative indexicals is that often, these students associate big words or quaint language with being proper academic language.

Whilst I attempted to explore issues of voicing and indexing in my analysis, it is important to bear in mind that in moving from one role or discourse to another (cf. Northedge, 1992), it is possible that attempts at indexing (showing one’s social positioning through the discourse used, cf. Bakhtin/Wortham, 2001) are not successful or are inappropriate. Students have assumptions, and sometimes misconceptions, of what they should sound like and how they should relate to others in their writing. For example, in students’ essay writing, sentences such as ‘[name of authority] says...’, followed by a quote, are, indeed, indexicals. However, students often still need to learn to use them appropriately. Often, in initial essays, it seems that when students quote, it is as if those words or views are *truth* and cannot be tampered with or criticized. In other words, the simple fact that they are quoted, indexes the (quoted) authors as authorities and possibly intently indexes the student author as ‘learned’.

Narrative analysis

Narrative theory refers to a school of ideas developed in the study of literature. It is also a field of thought that underlies a stream of psychotherapeutic analysis in which both the stories people tell about themselves and how they tell them are attended to. (In my discussion, however, when I talk of ‘narrative analysis’, I am speaking of *analysis* within the discourse of research rather than psychotherapy.) What underlies narrative theory here is recognition of the fact that the meaning that people attribute to their experience constitutes their lives, and that the stories we tell ourselves determine which aspects of experience we select out for expression. Furthermore (and notably important to narrative therapy), as stories change, in their retelling, so do perspectives, and the generation of new stories enables individuals to perform new meanings – and this is what White and Epston (1990) refer to as ‘migrating identities’. Relating this idea to my interest, the stories we tell ourselves as learners influence our practices and experiences within our learning, and of course, the outcomes. However, our senses of selves are always in flux – due to new knowledge and experience, and within this migration process, our stories change – we tell new narratives.

In my study, my use of the term ‘narrative’ refers to that which is narrated – it becomes a story in that it is one of many possibilities in terms of selecting pieces and putting them together to construct an overall picture. Polkinghorne distinguishes between two types of analysis: what he calls ‘analysis of narratives’, which employs paradigmatic reasoning – here the paradigmatic analysis of the collected stories ‘results in descriptions of themes that hold across the stories or in taxonomies of types of stories, characters, or settings’ (1995:12), and ‘narrative analysis’, which uses narrative reasoning, where descriptions of events and happenings are collected and synthesized or configured by means of a plot into a story or stories, such as history, case study, or biographic episode (1995:12). He sums up: ‘analysis of narratives moves from stories to common elements, and narrative analysis moves from elements to stories’ (1995:12). In other words, the data of narrative analysis does not have to be in storied form, but stories can be produced as an outcome of the research (these answer the questions of ‘how?’ and ‘why?’).

Riessman (1993) suggests the concept of narrative as being an integral research tool for studying human behavior; essentially, it is ‘the story itself’ that narrative analysis takes as its object of investigation. She explains that the importance of narrative arose out of the deficiencies of natural scientific methods for studying social phenomena and the consideration by scholars, such as Bakhtin, Barthes, Ricoeur and Bruner, who began to see ‘narrative as the organizing principle for human action’ (Riessman, 1993:1). In other words, it is human agency and imagination that determine what gets included and excluded in narrativization, how events are plotted, and what they are supposed to mean, and, as Riessman explains, ‘Individuals construct past events and actions in personal narratives to claim identities and construct lives’ (1993:2).

A growing number of disciplines are now recognizing the value of narrative in research. Some common themes in research that pay attention to narrative in respondents’ accounts are listed by Elliott:

An interest in people’s lived experiences and an appreciation of the temporal nature of that experience, a desire to empower research participants and allow them to contribute to determining what are the most salient themes in an area of research, an interest in process and change over time, an interest in the self and representations of the self, an awareness that the researcher him- or herself is also a narrator. (2005:6)

The three key features of narratives, according to Elliott (2005), are that they are chronological, meaningful and inherently social (being produced for a specific audience). It is these key features, says Elliott, that underpin the importance of narrative (in sociology), due to, ‘growing recognition among sociologists of the importance of the temporal dimension for understanding the inter-relation between individual lives and social contexts... [due to the] humanist tradition within sociology which stresses the importance of attempting to understand the meaning of behavior and experiences from the perspective of the individuals involved [and the fact that] sociological research is clearly carried out within a social context.’ (Elliott, 2005:4). Furthermore, both the content and the structure of the narrative are composed for an audience. Atkinson and Delamont point out that ‘social scientists need to treat narratives as “accounts” and as “performances”’ (2006:166). Thus, narrative analysis, in research, can examine the aspects of agency, temporality, event, context and format.

An obvious method in narrative analysis would be that of thematicization of aspects of the narrative or text, or the categorization of events, ideas or concepts. These categories or themes would only emerge through the process of analysis, rather than be presumed before performing the analysis. However, there are aspects other than the content which could be explored, and, in fact, due to the very key features of temporality, meaningfulness and interactiveness, an analysis of narratives that focuses only on what is told, and not on how or what has influenced it (perhaps, 'why'), would be thin. According to Ivanič and Weldon (in Candlin & Hyland, 1999), the construction or use of categories in research analysis is regarded as being problematic by a number of researchers, and for a number of reasons. Firstly, that it is intensive and systematic, which results in 'data analysis' being in danger of becoming 'data reduction', and they caution, 'While searching for categories, constructs and connections, and while writing up, it is essential to keep as close as possible to the data itself: to make generalizations 'without sacrificing flavor, thick description, or a sense of the full context'' (1999:185-186). They continue to explain that categories are no use without the 'story line', but that researchers must be careful to *find* it rather than *create* it and 'searching for the key linkage must happen during the process of generating constructs and categories' (1999:186). Earlier, Riessman (1993) wrote of the dangers of simply taking pieces of a text without paying attention of the location and make-up of that piece in relation to its other pieces. She illustrates the importance of context, story structure, sequence and form in narrative. For these reasons, of course, language is an extremely important factor in narrative analysis. Riessman (1993) points out that within the narrative process, language 'is understood as deeply constitutive of reality, not simply a technical device for establishing meaning. Informants' stories... are constructed, creatively authored, rhetorical, replete with assumptions, and interpretive' (Riessman, 1993:4-5).

Reissman (2005) divides models of narrative analysis into four typologies – thematic, structural, interactional and performative types of analysis – of which combinations are possible. In summary: the emphasis of *thematic analysis* is on the content of a text – 'what' is said more than 'how' it is said, the 'told' rather than the 'telling' (Reissman, 2005:2), and such analysis is underpinned by an unacknowledged philosophy of

language, where ‘language is a direct and unambiguous route to meaning’ (Reissman, 2005:2); stories are collected and conceptual groupings are created (Grounded theory), typically represented through the organization of themes, with vignettes or case studies providing the illustration. This is useful for theorizing across a number of cases – finding common thematic elements across research participants and the events they report. Language here is seen as a resource rather than a topic of investigation; the context (of utterances) is not usually considered, and so ambiguities of meaning or language are not taken into account. The emphasis of *structural analysis* is on the way a story is told; ‘the focus is equally on form – how a teller by selecting particular narrative devices makes a story persuasive. ...language is treated seriously – an object for close investigation – over and above its referential content’ (Reissman, 2005:3). Thematic content is obviously still considered. Structural analysis is useful in detailed case studies and comparison of several narrative accounts. ‘Microanalysis of a few cases can build theories that relate language and meaning in ways that are missed when transparency is assumed, as in thematic analysis. ... Like the thematic approach, strict application of the structural approach can decontextualize narratives by ignoring historical, interactional and institutional factors. Research settings and relationships constrain what can be narrated and shape the way a particular story develops’ (Reissman, 2005:4). *Interactional analysis* emphasizes the dialogic process between teller and listener. Although both content and structure are noted, the ‘...interest shifts to storytelling as a process of co-construction, where teller and listener create meaning collaboratively’ (Reissman, 2005:4). Finally, *performative analysis* is where ‘...storytelling is seen as performance – by a ‘self’ with a past – who involves, persuades, and (perhaps) moves an audience through language and gesture, ‘doing’ rather than telling alone’ (Reissman, 2005:5) and in this, various features could be analyzed, and aspects such as interactional and institutional contexts can also be considered.

There are different ways of presenting the storyline that Ivanič and Weldon (1999) emphasize. Richardson, for example, talks of a ‘collective narrative’ which is used to suggest a type of research account that represents the common experiences of a group of people who are typically marginalized, silenced, or excluded from more dominant

narratives and discourses in society' (in Elliott, 2005:166). Her research involved interviewing single women having affairs with married men; her collective narrative demonstrates the similarities and themes that emerged as a result of the research.

In fact, the act of interpretation is a crucial component within narrative analysis, since narratives are unable 'to speak for themselves' (personal Narratives Group 1989a cited in Riessman, 1993:22), and Riessman (1993) asserts that, as far as our interpretations of these narratives are concerned, the process should steer towards deeper understanding rather than determination of event. She cautions that a 'master narrative' does not actually exist, as 'all texts stand on moving ground' (1993:15). As far as the authority of the researcher or analyst is concerned, she explains that all attempts at representing the experiences of others are limited – because 'our subjects 'do not hold still for their portraits'' (Clifford, in Riessman, 1993:15). Said (1979) phrases it aptly when he asserts that '... we must be prepared to accept the fact that a representation is *eo ipso* implicated, intertwined, embedded, interwoven with a great many other things besides the 'truth,' which in itself is a representation' (cited in Riessman, 1993:16).

Thus, not only is the story telling done by our research informants, but it is also what is done by us with our research materials (Riessman, 1993). We too, select out aspects from the research experience to tell our research stories. The researcher too is telling a story or creating a narrative. Riessman points out that an important aspect of narrative analysis is the analysis of the manner in which interviewees construct and develop their experiences in order to make meaning of events and actions that have impacted on their lives. The arrangement of the story, the linguistic cues and the socio-cultural contexts which are combined to relay the story, and the manner in which these relate as an expression of authenticity, are all crucial aspects of narrative analysis. In this way it is not simply the story itself but the ways, 'the forms of telling about experience' that emerge. This type of analysis begins to answer the question of 'why... the story [was] told *that way*?' (Riessman, 1993:2).

Narrative analysis also enables an examination of how meaning is constructed by the narrators, to a certain extent through a study of reasoning presented and reflections or

thinking actions that are evident. Meizerow (1990) used a coding system to distinguish types of reflective actions. Non-reflective actions, according to Meizerow's (1990) theory, range from habitual actions through to thoughtful actions and introspection (which is non-reflective because it does not involve re-examination). Reflective actions range from content reflection (on what we think, act upon, feel), through process reflection (on how we are perceiving), to what he calls premise reflection (becoming aware of why we perceive, think or feel as we do). Each of these types of thinking actions has an impact on voice, agency and dialogue in writing, which, in turn, has an impact on the construction of self.

A similar method of analysis was used by Holt (1994), who used a set of codes as a means of determining cognitive activities or thinking skills stimulated by journal writing. Holt claims that this helped determine and compare the depth and breadth of thinking that took place in each journal. Her list (adapted from Fulwiler, 1989) consisted of aspects of observation, speculation, doubt, questions, self-awareness, connections, digressions, information, revision, problem-stating, problem-solving, emoting and ideation/planning. Fulwiler (1989) also included confirmation and dialogue, both of which could be considered in dialogic journals.

Thus, it is apparent that both an examination of *how* things are said, in other words, an analysis of various aspects of discourse, and *what* is said, and how this changes – narrative analysis can provide insight into students' transformations or migrations in thinking, constructing meaning, and identity, a process involving taking on of agency and expressing one's voice. I now describe the detail of the methodology I used.

Methodology

I have stated my Research question as:

How is 'voice' transformed through emerging reflective functioning and agency in the development of an authorial identity in the academic institution?

I have stated a further subquestion, which asks:

What transformations occur through the development of new ways of constructing meaning in academic thought and writing, and how do these relate to migrations of identity in mature students coming to study at an institution of Higher Education?

My focus in this study is not on students' formal academic writing itself, but on what they related about adapting to formal academic writing or academic literacy practices, in their journals, in which their writing was not necessarily that of a formal academic writing style.

Data for research

The main source of my data is students' dialogical journals. As I have explained, they were initially collected for other purposes, dialogical journaling initially being a pedagogic tool that became data for my research, due to the evident richness of the journal entries. The journals were intended and used as a pedagogic method in an endeavour to provide students with an access route into the academy, incorporating their experiences, and attempting to promote the development of reflective and critical thinking, and of self-awareness as academic writers. The journals are used as data in my research, because as raw data, it offers unguarded commentary on the experience of university in a classroom of wider access. The journals provide insights into students' contexts, both previous and current, and offer information on how these contexts and experiences are perceived.

In addition to their journals, I have access to three other genres of writing by students that they submitted in their reflective portfolios: their reflective essays (including a discussion of a 'critical incident'), their essay drafts and final academic assignments. At the beginning of my research writing I was in touch with some of the students who provided me with some retrospective reflections on their course and journal experiences. Whilst I focus on the journals themselves, on occasions I refer to students' other pieces of writing for corroboration of my observations, or for comparison where relevant.

Sample

Having run the course for four years, I have collected roughly 140 journal portfolios, each of which tells an individual narrative or chronicle of the learning experience over one year. For reasons of containment, I have restricted my sample to journals submitted by students in two intakes of the course. These were years in which the journaling exercise had become firmly established and where regular entries were expected through the year of study as part of the course requirements. This amounts to journal portfolios by 70 students. Weekly entries ranged from a half-page paragraph to a few pages (most of which were hand-written). With individual student portfolios consisting of approximately 20 weekly journal entries and responses from partners and ourselves, quarterly reflective essays and possibly extra assignment drafts, an average individual portfolio amounted to between 200 and 400 pages in bulk.

Profile

Appendix 6 presents a general profile of the sample in terms of biographical details, such as race, gender, home language, location, part- or full-time student status and professional status. A detailed breakdown in terms of these axes is given below.

Grand total: 70

Gender:

Female: 38; Male: 32

Race:

Black: 48	(23 females; 25 males)
Coloured: 17	(12 females; 5 males)
White: 5	(3 females; 2 males)

Home language¹:

Afrikaans: 8	(6 females; 2 males); (all part time, local)
English: 15	(10 females; 5 males); (13 part time; 2 full time; all local)
Setswana: 30	(18 females; 12 males); (all full time, from Botswana)
Xhosa: 15	(11 females; 4 males);

¹ At the beginning of the course, students were asked to submit details about themselves, which included a question about their home language. Whilst they tended to respond by naming only one language, it is likely that in some instances, more than one language was spoken in the home.

Foreign² (African): 2

(13 part time, local;
2 full time, from Eastern Cape Province;
1 female, 1 male)
(both male; both full time)

Home locality:

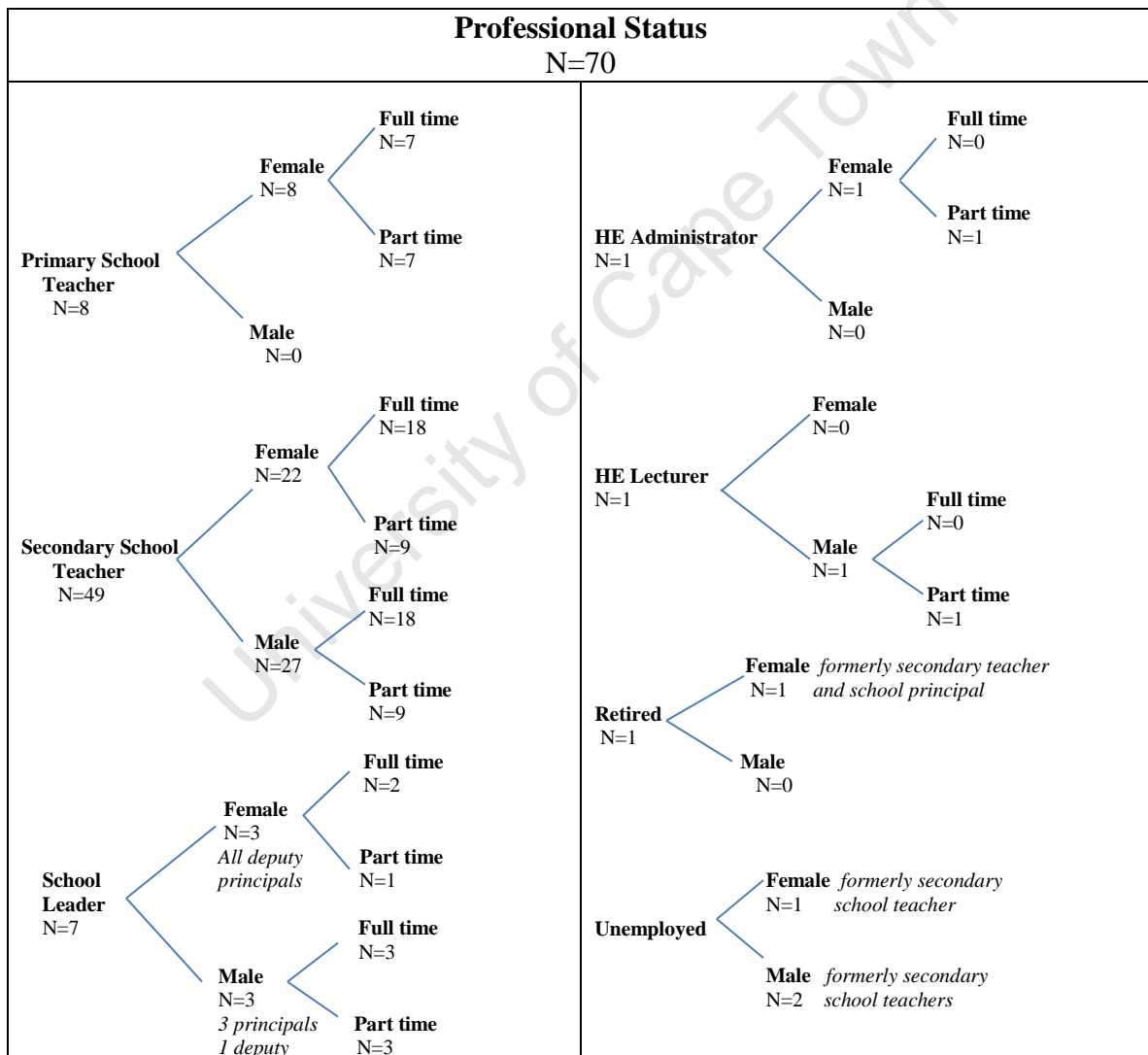
Cape Town: 36
Rest of South Africa: 2
Botswana: 30
Out of Southern Africa: 2

(2 full time; 34 part time)
(both full time)
(all full time)
(both full time)

Part / full time:

Part time: 34
Full time: 36

(24 females; 10 males)
(15 females; 21 males)



² Other than from South Africa or Botswana.

Afrikaans, English and Xhosa are the local languages, and so speakers of these languages were most likely to be studying on a part time basis. The majority of these part time students were female.

Seven students dropped out of the course. Appendix 7 gives details of these. They were all local, part-time students, (6 females (5 coloured; 1 black); 1 black male).

Possibilities for analysis

Various comparisons were possible within my analysis, most notably along the axes of status of the English language (for example, whether it is a mother tongue or a second or third language), place of residence (local or not), whether the student was studying full- or part-time, and the gender and race of the student. Race is a significant aspect for consideration whilst conducting social research in South Africa, as I have highlighted in Chapter 1. It has implications for (or serves as an identifier of) a variety of factors, such as socio-economic status, educational background, perceived and experienced advantages, barriers and expectations. I try to refer to these influences where relevant. This is why I have made a note of students' race in their biographical details. In South Africa, whilst I believe we are all 'Africans', a 'black' person refers to someone with a dark skin and a historically African heritage, and, if they lived in South Africa, historically oppressed; a 'coloured' person refers to someone of historically mixed racial heritage, also historically oppressed in South Africa, although slightly less so than black people; a 'white' person refers to someone with a light coloured skin and a historically Western heritage, and historically privileged over other races in South Africa³. Appendix 5 gives the biographical details of each of the individual students, who have been given pseudonyms, to cover their real identities.

The journal entries, as well as the formal essay writing of students in my study had the potential to be examined along structural, interactional and performative or thematic lines. Such an analysis can produce stories about migrations of identity, developing critical thinking and authorial identities, and about mature students' experiences. It can

³ While the statistical information presented in Chapter 1 and Appendix 8 include South African Indians, my sample did not include any members from this grouping.

also steer towards a deeper understanding of factors that affect voice, agency and development of critical thinking in writing by mature students at higher educational institutions.

Method of analysis

As a first step of inquiry I used a Grounded theory approach. My method of Grounded theory involved reading and re-reading my data, noticing trends and gradually picking out commonalities and attaching codes to them. At first, I spent time reading or probing the data for themes along which to analyse. I drew up some initial codes on reading a small sample. These were added to as I read further. In subsequent reading of these coded data, I refined my codes, sometimes merging, sometimes further dividing original codes. (Extracts could be allocated more than one code.) This served as a form of deconstructing my data, as I read through the portfolios (reading ‘horizontally’). I then read through the extracted data, code-by-code (reading ‘laterally’ – across the codes), as a means of reconstructing the data. In this way I generated some initial ‘theory’ about my data. The procedure of grouping data into coded files usually included my typing up the extracts from hand-written journal entries.

The common themes that I identified and used as codes when reading through the portfolios are listed below, with a brief explanation. The labels for my categories are termed by myself as a means of articulating the experiences related by the participants.

AGENCY	Any evidence or potential of responsibility taken on in learning or writing. Indications of a sense of self in control or directing their own learning or discursive direction in their writing or learning.
ALIENATION/BELONGING	Relating to the student’s feelings of being an outsider or fitting in at the institution.
APPEALS FOR HELP	Where students were struggling and asked for help – either from their partner or from us.
ATTITUDE TO LEARNING	Evidence of how students regarded their learning and their level of responsibility in the process.
CRITICAL THINKING	Any evidence of reflective thought around course content, readings or class discussions.
COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE	Aspects relating to communities of practice.
DEALINGS WITH READINGS	Comments relating to how students dealt with their readings.
DEVELOPMENT	Notable evidence of development in their learning, writing, sense of self, coming of voice, agency.
DIALOGUE IN WRITING	Evidence of a sense of dialogue between the voices they came

	across – in their readings and with each other; sense of a reader of their writing.
DISCOURSE STYLE	Illustrations of use of particular discourse styles.
EDUCATIONAL HISTORY/ VOICE	Comments giving insights into their educational experiences and how they were allowed to express themselves. Reasons for being here.
GRASP OF CONTENT	Evidence of understanding of the content of their readings or courses.
LANGUAGE	Issues that students wrote about around language.
LIBRARY	Issues that students wrote about related to the library.
OTHER PRESSURES	Comments relating to difficulties they experienced.
OUR RESPONSES	Notable illustrations of comments from ourselves.
PARTNER RESPONSES	Notable illustrations of comments from journal partners.
POLITICAL	Politically related comments.
REFERENCING	Issues that students wrote about related to referencing.
RELATING TO OWN EXPERIENCES	Comments that linked issues from readings/learning to their own experiences.
SENSE OF SELF	Comments that gave insights into students' senses of their self.
TECHNOLOGY	Issues that students wrote about related to technology.
RESEARCH AND WRITING PROCESS	Comments about students' research and writing process.
VIEW OF KNOWLEDGE	Comments illustrative of students' views of knowledge.

I then extracted the relevant pieces from the students' journals, noting the student's name, and, having numbered individual student's journal entries, their journal entry number (or sometimes the month of the entry), or if it was from one their reflective essays (RE) or reflection on a critical incident (CI). Together with notes of my own, these collections of extracts were put into coded folders for further reading and deeper (discourse and narrative) analysis. 'Voice' was a 'core phenomenon' that was relevant across my codes. 'Agency' and 'Sense of self' were 'core categories' to which many of my codes spoke. On further reading through these codes, I grouped them into thematically related folders comprising:

Descriptive aspects, which included my previous themes of 'alienation/belonging', 'educational history', 'language', 'library', 'other pressures', 'political', and 'views of knowledge'.

Discourse styles, consisting of illustrations of the types of discourse style students adopted in their journal writing.

Referencing, consisting of what students wrote about their understandings of and grapples with the practice of referencing in formal academic writing. This theme related closely to the above theme of **Discourse styles**.

Agency/sense of self, which included previous themes of ‘agency’, ‘critical thinking’, ‘dealings with readings’, ‘attitude to learning’, ‘grasp of content’, ‘relating to own experiences’, and ‘sense of self’. This was later merged with **Development**, including the research and writing process.

Communities of practice, which included ‘partner responses’, ‘dialogue in writing’ and ‘our responses’.

At first I formed these into four sections of analysis. Later, on reflection, I decided to merge some of the group theme, ‘Communities of practice’ with a background chapter describing dialogical journals, because it spoke of the experience of dialogical journal writing as an exercise (rather than an analysis of students’ transitions). The rest of this theme contained an analysis of the development of reflective functioning, which overlapped with development of agency, and so I merged it with the Agency group of themes.

My analysis uncovers a window onto students’ ‘migrations of identities’, their transitions in ‘interpretive frameworks’ and engagements within new knowledge communities (including the manifestation of writer-reader awareness in their writing, the awareness and use of various voices and their own in their learning and writing, and the development of reflective functioning and taking on of agency in their learning and writing).

My use of discourse analysis pays attention to Fairclough’s (1992) guidance of four aspects to make it useful. I have attempted to make it ‘multidimensional’ in that I study relationships within and between texts, interactions and contexts, ‘multifunctional’ in that I study how changes in discourse practices, knowledge, social relations and identities relate, ‘historical’ in that I look at what is said during the construction of texts and what ensues, and ‘critical’ in that I attempt to highlight connections and causes affecting the phenomena under examination.

According to Fairclough (1993), discourse analysis includes description of text, interpretation of the relationship between text and interaction, and explanation of the

relation between interaction and social context. In talking of the sorts of analysis that can be done in discourse analysis, he talks of it always involving ‘a progression from interpretation to description and back to interpretation: from interpretation of the discourse practice (processes of text production and consumption), to description of the text to interpretation of both of these in the light of the social practice in which the discourse is embedded’ (Fairclough, 1998:231). As Fairclough (1998) points out, description and interpretation are not as separate as is often assumed. My analysis is divided into three chapters, the first of which is largely descriptive – interpreting discourse practices (contextual backgrounds).

My discourse and voice chapter describes practices in their written journal entries (their discourse styles), and what they write about, relating to their understandings of how to use voice/s in their writing. My final analysis chapter attempts further explanation of the transformation of voice and emerging reflective functioning, and agency.

Across all three analytical chapters, I have attempted to illustrate a ‘story line’ of development. With the focus of my study being what is involved in the development of an authorial identity, it has been important to bear in mind the stories students tell themselves through their journey. At some stage, I found that my division of my sections appeared to align with Clark and Ivanič’s (1997; Ivanič, 1998) three aspects to a writer’s identity, the ‘autobiographical self’ (the identities that students brought with them to their writing), the ‘discoursal self’ (how students presented themselves in their writing), and the ‘self as author’ (students’ sense of their selves as author of their writing).

This research relies on my interpretations of what students have written about their experiences, so it is not unbiased. As Norton (2010b) points out of identity research in general, because it relies on the interpretations of both the researcher and participants, it cannot be objective; it is ‘situated’ and the researcher is integral to the progress of the research. She also explains that ‘identity researchers aim to investigate the complex relationship between social structure on the one hand, and human agency on the other, without resorting to deterministic or reductionist analyses. While taking race, class,

gender and other structural issues into account in our analysis, we need to ensure that we leave conceptual room for the actions and investments of human agents’ (Norton, 2010b:352). In addition, she states that identity researchers also aim to improve understandings of ‘how power operates within society, constraining or enabling human action’ (ibid).

Coding of students and extracted texts

Where I have quoted extracts of their written texts, I have indicated the number or month (if entries were not regular) of their journal entry or partner’s response (PR). If the extract was not from a journal entry I have indicated if it was a quarterly reflective essay (RE) or ‘critical incident’ (CI) in their final portfolio. The occasional quotes from their email correspondence, drafts or formal essays are indicated as such in my text.

Ethical considerations

On an ethical note, I have contracted with each of these students to allow me to use their course writings in my research. A letter of consent signed by the students is included as Appendix 1.

In order to maintain confidentiality, I have concealed students’ identities in this thesis, using pseudonyms. Appendix 5 provides details of the individual students, using their pseudonyms, with regards to their gender, race, home language, professional status, home locality and whether they were students on a part or full time basis.

When quoting from students’ writing, I have transcribed precisely what the students have written – so as not to risk misrepresenting what they say. However, normally, I have corrected minor spelling errors.

Scope and limitations

A number of limitations are contained within this study, in terms of time, resources and sampling. The study is limited in that it tracks development over one year of study only. Thus, my analysis is telling of initial transitions only, where students are getting

acquainted (with the academic discourse community and with each other), seeing what is in common, interesting, worth building on, has potential, and so on.

In addition, formal academic writing, drafts and essays, are not the main focus of this study. Such a study would offer different sorts of information but would be confining in terms of analysis along narrative dimensions. Furthermore, such an analysis may run the risk of losing the ‘voices’ of the students themselves as the *confined narrative* into which they are being inducted in their academic writing actually makes them invisible as individuals and social beings.

I would also like to note that my study focuses in particular on formal learning in higher educational institutional settings, and that while I do not ignore learning processes in general in the participant’s life, my research is about learning in university contexts. For example, I do not analyze or contrast learning to write or using writing in other contexts with learning or using writing at school. My study is centered on the university as a community of practice and how its writing practices are constructed by mature returning students with a ‘non-traditional’ background.

I acknowledge that there are potential clashes in my own identities – as mentor and provider of support, interested in hearing and guiding students, lecturer, interested in getting them through their courses, curriculum developer, interested in providing a course which would be of value to students in their other courses, and researcher, interested in the students’ experiences and in interpreting them within a specific context. These various roles and identities would affect what students write to me and also my readings of what they write. Furthermore, my comments here are based on my own *interpretations* of what they have written. Often these interpretations may be informed by my knowledge of what was happening in the context of the classroom of which I was a part. I try to make this ‘weaving in’ of information transparent.

The use of data collected for other purposes and then used in research as a retrospective decision, may be considered unconventional in terms of accepted research methods.

However, I would argue that it is a natural evolution of research; the data collected in one exercise unintentionally provided evidence for a (research) problem in need of analysis. In preparing for analysis, I had to *discover* the ‘theory’⁴, and although my data was not collected with a conscious or deliberate idea of a method of analyzing it, the discovery of the theory provided a discipline within which to do an analysis.

In a sense, having data that was not collected intentionally for research purposes can be considered to be less biased than that collected using the conventional research methods; the students in my course did not write of their reflections with the idea of contributing to a research project – and thus with a conception of what may be of interest to a researcher, which could have resulted in a form of self-censorship. Likewise, my responses and prompts were genuinely focused on benefiting the students rather than being formulated for more personal gains, or for research purposes. It could be argued that students may, in any case, have written what they thought I, as their lecturer, wanted to ‘hear’ or read. This was the nature of the exercise in one sense; I was explicit about wanting to hear or read about what they thought. Like any new acquaintanceship, it took time for participants to relax, to develop a relationship of trust with myself, Bongi and their journal partners, and for expectations (of the exercise) to be truly determined. This, I would argue, is part of the process anyway of developing one’s voice and a discursive identity.

I now proceed to relating my findings. What follows are three chapters of analysis – of description and interpretation.

⁴ Here I am using the term loosely – complying with the label of my Grounded theory research design.

University of Cape Town

Chapter 5

Descriptive Analysis: The selves that are brought to the institution

Boud wrote of his theoretical position on learning:

The effects of prior experience influence all learning. Learners ...always bring the totality of their life history with them. ... Their prior experience of learning and the prior experience of being taught is extremely influential and will often have a more dominant effect than any learning activities that are constructed for them. (1993:35)

As my initial section of analysis, I would like to focus on what the students brought of their selves to their studies: the potential impact on their senses of self while they were here. This could relate to the student writer's 'autobiographical self' (Ivanić, 1998; Clark & Ivanić, 1997). As mentioned in Chapter 1, there was a wide range of students that I engaged with on this course, in terms of language backgrounds, ages and schooling, and teaching experiences, as well as training. This chapter is a descriptive one in order to provide a background picture against which further analysis can be done. Based on narratives written by students in their journals, it provides some descriptions of the students' reasons for being at the institution, some insights into their varied educational backgrounds and social environments, and what students mentioned in regard to what made them feel alienated from, or belonging to, the institution on arrival. I also include those factors related by students as having hindered or helped a feeling of belonging at the institution during their stay. In particular, students mention issues relating to language, academic discourse, styles and culture (the academic game), technology and the library, as well as the social environment at the institution. This section presents the selves constructed by students in their journal writing.

Educational backgrounds and social environments

Varied schooling experiences were related in terms of being able to get to school, attitudes towards school, treatment by educators, school resources, what was learnt and how. A large number of the black students were the first generation in their families to get a formal education. Ayanda wrote that there was not one person in his township who had a degree. Some started school at a late age, due to factors such as poverty in the home

or distance from the school. This could affect their perceptions of themselves and their abilities and their participation in their learning environments. For example, Dino only started school at the age of 10 (four years later than the norm), and he claimed that, as a result, he was very shy and did not feel as free to relate stories as the rest of his younger classmates at school. Lungisa, who grew up in the Eastern Cape with his grandmother as his parents were working in Cape Town, started school at the age of 8 because he was too little to walk the long distance to school. He wrote of the nightmarish nature of the school and the harshness of the teachers in using corporal punishment and that as a result, learners would not want to go to school.

Most learners dropped out of school because they would not bear walking a long way to school and teachers punished them all the time. I wanted to drop out but my grandmother would not let me. She always said to me ‘although I am not educated my children are educated and you are going to be someone one day’. I managed to pass standard seven under those circumstances. I had to leave home and stay with my aunt because there was no high school around my location [township]. (Lungisa:2)

Resources varied according to the type or location of the school they had attended; Vuyiswa spent the first three years of her primary education being taught under a tree, but she loved being at this school, especially as it was one place where she was sure of a decent meal, as compared to her home. On the other hand, Neo attended secondary schooling in a mission school in Zimbabwe. He mentioned that the mission schools of what he refers to as ‘the colonial era’¹ were highly respected.

In terms of post-school education, for the majority of the class, this university, the University of Cape Town, would not have been accessible to them early in their careers, due to the South African apartheid laws. Their previous tertiary institutions were thus usually colleges of education, which they considered inferior to this university. So, to many of them, being here was regarded as a great privilege. Most of these students had primary school teachers’ diplomas from local colleges (in South Africa and Botswana), a number of them had gone on to train as secondary school teachers, a few had a bachelor’s degree and further or higher education diplomas or advanced certificates in education or training in adult basic education. Amongst those who were not privileged by the

¹ Generally understood as the period during which such African countries were considered as British ‘colonies’, before their independence. Often also referred to for the period following independence, in which remnants of the era, such as the educational system, which was based or modeled on the British one and taught by missionaries, were maintained.

apartheid system, the field of education had generally been considered an easily accessible training option with a fair guarantee of job opportunities. For example, after passing matric, Lungisa was advised by his aunt, a teacher, to look for a teaching college as it was the only thing his parents could afford². Eventually he was accepted at a college in Cape Town. He wrote that he took some time to think of himself as a teacher, but came to enjoy it. Students' paths generally went from primary school teaching – sometimes straight after school, with no initial training – through further training, to secondary school teaching. Many had been teaching for close to two decades. More of the females than males in the class seemed to have a long standing teaching career.

By way of example, here are some of the paths:

- Dora explained that in her day, coloured females were able to become primary school teachers after standard 8 (Grade 10) and three years of teacher training. After doing this, she did complete her matric and went on to do a course focusing on multilingualism in teaching, which she thoroughly enjoyed³.
- Mpho was hired as a junior secondary teacher after her own schooling was completed. Four years later, she trained as a secondary school teacher and then joined the Ministry of Education as a Mathematics teacher, serving in two village schools and two city schools.
- Yonela, a 44 year old from a local township, described her education as difficult, due to the student revolts, of which she was a part. She worked for two years after school, and then went to a teachers college in the Eastern Cape, where she qualified with a teacher's diploma. She has been teaching English in local township high schools for the last two decades.
- Hlengiwe wrote that when she entered teaching, women were not given posts of responsibility because they were considered inferior. However, through the years, her hard work was recognized and she eventually worked her way into a school management position.
- In contrast, Kevin, who came from a privileged school in KwaZulu-Natal, wrote that he excelled at school both academically and extramurally (in cricket and rugby). After doing his national service, he enrolled at a teachers' training college, and he did his practical teaching at primary and secondary schools. He taught first at a smart government school and then at a very smart private school, teaching Afrikaans and being heavily involved in the academic, extramural and pastoral programmes of the school. He and his wife lived on the school property and he was an assistant housemaster of the boarding house.

² In fact, in the late 80's and early 90's, all students admitted to colleges of Education were provided with Government bursaries (which, in many cases, were used to support families), so these were attractive options.

³ There was a teaching diploma black and coloured learners could get at colleges such as St Mathews and Lovedale in the course of their secondary schooling – to teach in primary schools – as Dora mentions.

A small number of the students (coloured and white females) had taught in UK, USA and Korea.

These students' teaching environments varied from primary to secondary schools, rural, urban, well-off and very under-resourced. Teachers in the poor schools found teaching frustrating with the lack of resources. Yonela said there were no chairs, no desks, no doors and no learning materials in her school and she questioned how she could progress in that sort of environment. She wrote that she felt hopeless and angry about the situation, but added that she would still not quit as she loved teaching. There were often problems with safety at school in socio-economically disadvantaged areas (Gadija). However, in the face of this sort of poverty, these teachers often committed themselves beyond the classroom in order to keep the school going.

[My school] was a school in the midst of a survival struggle, due to community violence, vandalism against the school and a parent body that wasn't interested in the school. However through various community projects and meetings we have been able to turn things around and make the community proud of its school. (Khan:3)

Educational practices

The challenges faced by mature or returning students are accentuated in South Africa by the fact that many such students were dis-abled by apartheid education, for example, in that there was little focus on or practice in formal academic literacy skills. In Chapter 1, I explained that the educational experiences of these students usually consist of transmission or non-reflective practices (where knowledge content is 'transmitted' to the learner via the teacher, without space being made for reflective activity around the 'knowledge'). Writing in the early days of Academic Development⁴ work in South Africa, Miller (1989) claimed that what impedes students from disadvantaged backgrounds in their progress at university is not new learning, but relics of old learning. Moll and Slonimsky (1989) explain that ex-DET⁵ students tended to be taught that there is one ground rule to educational activity: 'replicate what is given'. As a result, their means of interpreting information and, indeed, their views of knowledge, as well as their reading, writing and thinking practices, often require adaptations or adoptions of new

⁴ Then referred to as 'Academic Support'.

⁵ Department of Education and Training, a division of the apartheid education system allocated to black people.

forms or methods when they enter university. Such students, Miller claims, are likely to need assistance ‘in learning to unlearn – to untie the knots of previous learning – in order to create space for new kinds of learning’ (1989:158).

Students’ early educational practices and how they themselves were taught would affect how they viewed knowledge and their current attitudes towards their learning. One of the early readings given to them in our course was by Paulo Freire (2001), and immediately many could relate to what the text spoke about, in terms of how they had learnt to ‘learn’, and what the objectives of their ‘learning’ were. Dora wrote of how they were regarded as good students if they sat quietly and listened without talking or questioning, while their teachers ‘performed their acts of knowledge in front of the class’. She claimed that she did all her daydreaming in her History and Biology classes because she knew that the teacher would eventually write down the notes and possible exam questions and answers. She relied on her good memory and would simply learn the essays, questions and answers by heart and give them back during the exam. She added that she would have forgotten most of the essays immediately after the exam. She rarely understood the facts she had learnt. Critical thinking and questioning had not been encouraged.

During my school days, text books, particularly History text books, were extremely biased and when our opinions differed from those of the author we were unable to air our views. We were not considered knowledgeable enough to voice our opinions. I feel that if we were allowed to discuss and debate the text we were given, learning would have been much easier, because we would have gained a better understanding of the work. Pupils would also be more confident and skilled not only for exams but also in their future lives and careers, because they would have gained some experience in expressing their opinions and communicating these opinions to others. (Dora:2)

A lot of the students related ‘learning’ at school as being a regurgitation of facts and nothing more, for example, Thato wrote, ‘We used a lot of rote learning and memorising or cramming all the stuff about the Vasco–Da–Gamas and the like. But there was never ‘WHY that?’ (Thato:6). ‘Correct’ answers were taught, and learners’ understanding was not a major concern⁶. Memorisation was instilled under threat of punishment, such as ‘the stick’ or standing through lessons or staying in at recess. Phumla related that she had a brilliant mathematics teacher, but he was very abusive towards girls; he gave them ‘cuts’

⁶ The national examination system (in all three of the apartheid South African education departments) reinforced rote learning or memorization, especially in subjects like History.

on the back of their legs with a broomstick if they gave wrong answers. As a result, she was very scared of him and dropped the subject as soon as she was able to.

There was no creativity encouraged, or stimulation to learn, other than to get the examination questions right.

Teachers gave us notes and loads of notes to study for exams. They did not stimulate us with learning material or presentations which would make us curious, inquisitive or creative. ... Our teachers did not see us as composers (learners who can make up or put together words) because they were too concerned about disciplining and keeping order in their classes. (Pearl:2)

This affected how they as learners felt about the activity of reading. Often a passion for reading was inadvertently discouraged at school due to the ways of instilling it. Lindiwe claimed that she found reading boring because when she was young, they were forced to read and if they could not pronounce the words properly, they were beaten. Thato looked forward to a different system; that of 'investigative reading'.

Then you will be able to subject yourself to a positive attitude in learning. Reading will no longer be hell to us, but a challenge. Black Africans have no reading culture. We don't enjoy using our brains in pondering the knowledge. (Thato:6)

Many wrote that they had not been encouraged to read out of school, other than to memorise facts for a test. This activity was not pleasurable and led some to develop a hatred for reading. There was no conception of relating their learning to their own experiences, nor any encouragement of critical thinking, or conceiving of differing viewpoints.

We were never engaged in activities where we could actively, critically read and reflect on a text we have read so as to get a better understanding of the relationship between what we are reading and the world outside the classroom. The world outside the classroom was distinct from our activities at school. (Ayanda:2)

The written activities done at school were also unenticing in terms of the ways in which they were taught and practised. Gadija wrote that throughout junior school, writing was 'simply a technical experience'. She said they spent hours 'laboriously forming letters correctly' and that 'excellence was demonstrated by writing down what was memorised' (Gadija:1). Neo spoke of writing as 'an alien adventure':

Our education system was a labour market driven type, not for thinkers and entrepreneurial skilled individuals.... It encourages students to prepare themselves for exit examinations

only, but not skills to cope with in life. Hence writing becomes an alien adventure for most African graduates. (Neo:RE1)

Most of their own teachers were poorly qualified, seldom having more than a matric. Ravi claimed, 'There was no room for teachers to encourage students to read because they feared that students would know what the (teachers) know'.

These learnt attitudes to reading, writing and learning were often carried through into their own teaching practices. As a teacher, Viwe did little reading, even in her own subject area; she explained that she had everything she needed in her own notes, and there was no time to read. Before coming to this institution, all the reading she did was centered around the content of the subject that she taught. She reported that, in fact, she had stopped reading as she had mastered the contents of her subject and kept it all in her notes. She read some correspondence with supervisors at work and with suppliers to the school. Her time out of work was all taken up with chores. She said she was very out of practise with reading (and writing) and thus struggled to concentrate, comprehend, and get started on assignments. I did note, however, that through the preparations for the literature review assignment, she related her readings and what they spoke about; she was interested in what she read, and also had an interested partner who related to her entries and her readings).

Many seemed to passively adopt the teaching and learning methods they were taught, even though they knew these were inadequate. For example, Gugu commented that she found it difficult to get away from teaching using the teaching methods that her teachers used, whereby they only read in order to get the right answer in a 'comprehension' task, or to pass examinations, rather than reading so as to understand and gain information they could use in the future; 'They learn for the task at hand and by tomorrow they will have forgotten' (Gugu:8). Some of them realized that they were repeating these habits in their own teachings, or that they still existed, but they excused themselves with reasons such as the language of their learners:

Because learners are not confident about expressing themselves in a foreign language, material is often reproduced in the same words/language it was received, for fear that one would not phrase their idea correctly. (Qagamba:8)

Or the socio-economic class of their learners' families:

We are faced with problems of learners who do not value reading and the contributing factor is their social background. I have worked with children from middle class families and they impress me because they have a lot of confidence in reading and are able to communicate well because their parents are involved and care about their education. They buy them facilities at home and there is a lot of interaction even during meals.

(Phumla:6)

As to literacy practices in their home and school environments, different aspects of life were prioritised. Reading and writing were not big on the agenda at home: Godwin and his partner noted that they both came from the same sort of rural background, where parents were illiterate and reading was not allowed as there were more important or valued tasks to do, such as looking after the cattle and goats in the veld. Godwin said he opened a book once a month when he had to do a homework assignment or write a test. New Literacy Studies refers to 'different value systems' – which are evident in what Godwin related of his home environment, where the act of reading was not regarded as an important task, and could even be seen as a sign of laziness.

When I grew up I didn't receive an encouragement on reading my parents they are not well educated. After classes I was going to the veld to look after the cattle nobody asked me how was my day at school. When I came back at school they don't want me to open my books they said I must first make sure that duties I suppose to do I finish them. Duties like milk the cows and look after the cattle. Although my parents were like that they bring some presents if I pass. So most of the time I was studying at school, at home I didn't have time on reading. In English I was just memorising the facts without understanding.

(Godwin:6)

In addition, often books were not easily accessible in either the home or the school. Ravi explained that her parents were illiterate and so her living environment was not immersed with written text; nor indeed, at school, where very few reading materials were available. Her parents' involvement in her reading or school work was minimal and when at home, she was expected to prioritise household duties. She was only exposed to written materials when she was at school, and this with limited access. She added that the school did not encourage them to do any further reading out of class and the only time they were made to open a book was when they were given homework memorising facts for a test. She claimed that as a result she did not develop much of an attitude towards reading.

On the other hand, Gadija, whose mother had had little formal education, but had taught herself to read and write, and was determined that her children would receive a better education, taught her daughters basic reading and writing skills before they started school. There was an abundance of reading materials around the house. As a result, they were avid readers. She said that being the youngest of her sisters, a lot of time was spent alone while they were at school and she spent this time reading, and writing on walls, slates and paper. She added that her writing was imaginative, based on the fictional material available to her.

Students' reasons for being at this institution

Students' attitude to learning is likely to affect their sense of self and the sort of agency they take on. Similarly, their reasons for being at the institution are likely to affect what they take out of it. Some had come here to improve their prospects for promotion at work, as opposed to learning or acquiring more knowledge. The qualification was the goal (or the answer to their concerns).

These days we are living in a global village, if you are not adequately qualified your world becomes very very small and you will live behind events. In short a worthy qualification can help one break boundaries in terms of doing what you want to do in life and living or working in any country of your choice, because you have got what is needed to get you there. (Siya:1)

Improving their qualifications and therefore their career prospects was, in fact, the most common reason given by students for doing the degree. Many also mentioned keeping informed or learning about current issues in education and around teaching, and being able to improve their own practices as educators. As Pearl put it, 'I want to be more of an asset to the pupils in my care'. Often, specific mention was made of improving their knowledge of curricular, teaching and learning practices and to increase their skills in problem solving, critical inquiry and research, as well as interpersonal and intrapersonal skills. Most of those who were in school leadership positions wrote that they wished to learn more about educational administration and management, which is why the Botswana government sponsored a large number to come and do this diploma. (Some of these were put out at having to do theoretical courses such as Sociology of Education, rather than business-like courses related to human resource management and school

administration.) A few mentioned their excitement at learning about and keeping abreast with current issues that the international community is grappling with, and that this knowledge could offer some contributions to ideas for coping with local issues and to generating innovative solutions. A great motivator was passion for teaching and for learning more, and their wish to make a difference through this, as well as to widen their horizons.

Some stated that they did not wish to stagnate, for the sake of their pupils and their future prospects. Maggi, who had last studied fifteen years ago, gaining a primary teacher's diploma from a local college of education, and had been teaching at the same school for twenty-one years, wrote of her 'thirst for upliftment':

I yearn to get out of this rut I find myself in. I need to improve myself (morale wise and qualification) to make myself more marketable to 'get away'. ...I feel that I haven't grown professionally and need to improve myself. (Maggi:1)

Yonela, who had been teaching English in local township high schools since 1988, wrote, 'While I was enjoying my teaching I felt I was running short of more knowledge of my subjects' (jn11). She had felt empowered while doing another course in education five years previously and that it had made a difference to her teaching career. Since then, there had been a lot of changes in the department which she found confusing, especially around Outcomes Based Education (OBE), which she hoped now to learn how to implement effectively. In this context, Dora questioned her position:

After so many years of teaching and going through so many changes in education I just needed to be re-assured that I am still doing the right thing. I am also hoping to find out more about classroom changes according to OBE. (Dora:1)

Amy was hoping to better her chances for work overseas and to learn something in order to improve her teaching skills. The issue of being more marketable was mentioned by a lot of students; some, because they were unsure of being able to stay in their current posts and others because they felt that the degree would offer opportunities beyond teaching in their current posts.

Reasons given also included those of lessons to themselves and people around them, for example, to their family, that education provided an opportunity to alleviate poverty, and

wanting to ensure they were well regarded because of their qualification. Gugu wrote that she sometimes had to supervise ‘degree holders’, who looked down on her. Hettie was doing it ‘for herself’ after teaching for 40 years. She had worked as an assistant teacher in a primary school for two decades, then moved on to teacher training at a College of Education, and finally worked as a subject advisor in the provincial Department of Education. At the age of 55, after taking early retirement, she established a low cost independent school, and after five years of this, she decided to improve her own qualifications.

Often it had been some time since they had last been students themselves, due to child rearing or lack of opportunities to leave jobs and study. In addition, for the women, it was difficult to advance professionally due to gender discrimination in their profession. For example, Maggi, had been granted a year’s study leave by the Department of Education five years previously, but it was turned down by her principal, because she was ‘needed by the school’. Hlengiwe’s parents had not been able to afford to pay for her secondary school fees, so approached her uncle, who ‘was a bit educated’ and well paid, and agreed to her joining his family and to pay her fees. She wrote that, aside from being ‘low class’, she was ‘not gifted academically’ and she did not get a pass that would get her into tertiary studies: however, she was serious about her studies and worked very hard and managed to qualify as a primary school teacher. Life improved for her and her family and she taught for thirteen years, but mentioned that, ‘in all those years I didn’t advance to any post of responsibility... I worked at those times when women could not to be given posts of responsibilities because they were inferior’. Then, in 1985, there was an educational transformation in Botswana and she became a government nominee for further training. She went on to teach in Secondary schools and later become a deputy school principal. Over a decade later, she was again nominated for further education, to come to Cape Town.

On arrival...

In his first quarterly reflection, Neo gave a picturesque description of the culture shock he and others from his country experienced on arrival at the institution:

Most of my guys came with from my homeland were not at peace at all. They spent the first week of their stay here shivering, contemplating on going back home. When they saw the school over populated by the light coloured skin people, it was more frightening than ever. Knowing that in his lifetime he has never shared a bench with a white man and a small Mrs. by his side. Being taught the same curriculum and taught by another white man again was just to complicate life for these poor souls. Yes the argument was there, trying to make these folks change their minds. When the lectures commenced, and that pedagogy and discourse accompanied by OBE and teacher identity, paradigm were on top of the agenda, my friends did not take it light, they were more confused and wished to be wicked out of here within a blink of an eye. Whilst still overshadowed by the academic threats of plagiarism, a very unscrupulous and notorious weekend and Carol of the international office befell upon those intimidated friends of mine. This Carol had decided to take us on a site seeing expedition, which was very fascinating and too scary at some points. The evening came and I tried to chill them out with a cool beer by the Nigerian embassy and it did not work out. On Sunday morning I had already discovered a very nearby place of worship. As we originate from a religious nation I therefore invited these fellows to go for a prayer. To travel is like seeing; we sat down in church and were ready for the comforting procession to take place as usual, the deacon introduced the service to the congregation. Then another unfortunate day unravelled, because of the phobia of unknown language my guys were in trouble again. The white man reverend started his service with very tongue crisscrossing language. To make matters worse the interpreter too use a lot of clicks clocks and quirks type of a language which is also sandwiched by the cape coloured accent, all this left us puzzled and wondering if god had got the message of the day.

We sat down with our country men and asked them to be a little more pertinent for at least one more week, and then one would be in a position to make a little more sound decision of whether they stay and learn or they leave and go home without the degree. Fortunately Monday came, and passed with all the unwelcoming temperatures of lecture theatre 1, plus the pedagogy in progress. My friends were just swimming in deep confusion, with their over coats all over the show, yet the natives were just taking it easy and wearing light cloths.

(Neo:RE)

From what he relates, they were not used to studying with or under white people, or even interacting in general with white people. The discourse and issues under discussion in class were foreign to them, (Outcome Based Education was a system particular to South African education at the time). They were also somewhat intimidated by the institution's emphasis on the crime of plagiarism. He then raises further social oddities or strangeness experienced, in terms of local languages (isiXhosa and Afrikaans) and accents. Furthermore, they were not used to the type of weather in Cape Town, nor the casualness of the dress code of the university students.

Feelings of alienation and belonging

One of the categories of students' experiences was articulated by me as relating to feelings of alienation and belonging. Feelings of belonging to a grouping promote confidence within that grouping or community. This, in turn, enables the taking on of

one's agency and expressing of one's voice within that community and its practices. As an outsider, one can feel constrained by the structures and perceived allowances within one's identity related to the community. It is for these reasons that I chose this as a point of inquiry. How these students saw themselves as 'fitting in' to the academic community affected their potential agency.

In their first journal entry, a number of students mentioned how honoured they believed they were to be able to study at this institution, which 'housed the great minds of the rich and elite'.

How exciting! To find myself in the streets of Cape Town. I had always dreamt of seeing myself doing a Degree Course. Alas! Sometimes I thought it was for the highly intelligent people, since I have not classified myself in that category. I sometimes lost hope when year after year passed but indeed my dream came true, when I received an admission letter from University of Cape Town. (Phumla:1)

However, this excitement was accompanied with trepidation; the very idea of being at a university was overwhelming for some, due to its relative status in comparison with their previous institutions, the size of the university, and the number of people on campus. Hlengiwe wrote of the news of her having been accepted at the institution: 'It came like a dream as I never thought anyone would think of a person 47 years old going through education'. Although she was delighted, she admitted she also felt confused, but resolved to 'just work hard at it'. Lendy, also 47, a grandmother of three and a teacher, felt it was a great achievement to get here; 'Intellectually I am walking the steep hills behind the lecturers and professors' (Lendy:3), but added that she was hopeful that her 'predicament' would be understood and that she would be supported through her studies.

Following my journal prompt, in his first entry, written some way into the term, Godwin attempted to elucidate his new experiences related to academic culture; he appeared to experience a sense of alienation because of the way he saw people using English. He said he was surprised to find people from the same culture and home language as him, speaking English as though it was their mother tongue, that they had an English accent, rather than a Setswana one. He also mentioned that he sometimes did not understand essay questions or questions from his lecturers because they did not use 'simple English'.

He was also intimidated by the technology and was at first afraid to even touch a computer. He was also not used to being around people of different religions, such as Muslims, Hindus and ‘non-Christians’. He liked the fact that everyone was friendly and that there was support available, such as the writing centre, which he made regular use of. Later on, however, he experienced difficulties because he depended heavily on help from the staff in the writing centre, the computer labs and the library and they began to withdraw their support, wanting him to be more independent.

Thus, whilst many relished the idea that they were able to come to this formerly white/elite institution, some were ambivalent and felt they were at a disadvantage as they had not had a ‘smooth uninterrupted path through the education system like regular undergraduates’ (Gugu:6). Having a considerable gap since she last studied, at what she regarded as a ‘lesser’ institution, Maggi said she felt ‘very green’ at the beginning of the year at UCT. She was struck by the level of excellence and the high expectations with regards to students’ reading and writing. She also wrote that, because she was a teacher herself, she felt tremendous pressure to submit journal entries of a ‘certain calibre’. On the other hand, coming back to study was seen by one younger, white student as ‘returning home’ and she was enjoying it.

It has been a wonderful experience being part of ‘life on campus’ this past term. I have thoroughly enjoyed the student vibe – noticing their ‘*I’m desperately trying to look soooo cool*’ bravado, reading the indignant posters calling for action against the powers that be should a ‘study week’ not be allowed, and witnessing the wanna-be politicians calling one and all to support their worker’s rallies. Life on campus certainly isn’t dull, yet it seems that little has changed over the years – even hipsters and bellbottoms are still (again) in.

(Sue:RE1)

The fact that they were older than the ‘traditional’ student, and had had gaps since their previous studies, brought about mixed feelings regarding their university experiences. Hlengiwe felt inspired by the fact that there were people her age and older busy studying at UCT. A couple of students felt that coming back as mature students lent them confidences and wisdoms that they had not had as undergraduates and that they got much more out of their learning, and found reading much more exciting. For others it was seen as a frightening endeavour, due to the long period since they had last studied and their lack of practise in writing and reading, and the feeling that they had a lot to catch up on in

terms of practices, skills and understanding of concepts and current educational affairs and requirements. It was also strange to some having female lecturers, who were younger than themselves, for example, Yonela commented on her 'stereotyped old thinking' in expecting all male lecturers.

In addition, the thought that they would be sitting 'behind the desk' and 'inferior', rather than standing in front teaching (and 'superior' to those behind the desk) was an intimidating one. So naturally, it brought about some conflicts of identities. Neo wrote that he found it challenging because often teachers are viewed as people who know everything and so there was no need for them to study further. Gadija wrote, that there were many times that she felt she did not belong in the academic arena, as she was a grade 5 teacher who only knew how to teach basic grammar rules and sciences, and was used to talking in front of 9 year olds and thus, she claims, in her own classroom, there was no stress as she had all the knowledge and did not get challenged by her audience. To others, this change of roles could also be seen as refreshing in terms of the understandings it provided them of their own students' anxieties:

Being a 'student' again, reminded me of the anxiety that comes with having to complete your first assignment. This has been very rewarding in that this 'role reversal' has helped me empathize, consider and reflect on the anxiety being experienced by my second year PR students. Their first assignment is due soon and the tension is mounting. (Brian:2)

Early on, some students found that already they did not fulfill the expectations of the institution in terms of the skills they were assumed to have, and they felt inadequate. For example, lecturers assumed that students were computer literate, that they knew how to use the library, how to reference and how to do research. Una said that she sometimes left the lecture rooms feeling scared and shaky. Khan commented that at the beginning of the year lecturers often premised their statements with: 'As post graduate students you should be able to ...', and Mpho exclaimed, 'the literacy practices here are just too high'.

For students who had come to study from outside the city, and even outside South Africa, the university at first appeared 'glamorous' and offered a new experience and opportunity which was exciting, and referred to as 'a dream come true' by Lutho. Neo found the atmosphere conducive to his love for learning and that being here made him

feel that ‘everything is very possible in this world of learning’. However, within a couple of weeks, these same students wrote about their difficulties in fitting in, due to language issues, new concepts, the new discourse and style of writing, and the discovery that they are still not equipped with sufficient reading strategies, including ‘interrogative reading’ or ‘reading into writing’ (according to Phendu) and that, in fact, they had been disadvantaged by their educational and cultural backgrounds. In addition to difficulties with (mis)understandings of expectations in terms of actual academic requirements, students did not always understand terms used by lecturers, as well as jokes or sayings (such as, ‘Here comes the Easter bunny!’), acronyms (for example, ADHD) and even taken-for-granted knowledge; assumptions were made by lecturers about their teaching experiences and their acquaintances with major topics of the day, such as the South African Department of Education’s Outcomes Based Education (OBE) policy. Thus, there were many adjustments required on arrival, due to language, cultural, generational, class differences, and strange institutional idiosyncrasies and concerns.

The social environment at the institution: *They whispered to confirm whether I am a Xhosa speaker*

The earlier quote from Neo points to the impact of the social environment at the institution. Students’ experiences within the social environment at the institution would affect their senses of selves and the socially structured perceived allowances in terms of agency and voice.

On the whole, students tended to stick with peers from similar language backgrounds.

Today in this university I am seeing plenty white students and plenty black students. One big question is how much interaction is taking place among these students, outside their lecture times. Among the white skinned guys I find *Chinese* speaking their Chinese language there Portuguese also doing the same there Afrikaners also there with their language so is the case with the black African students in their different linguistic groups.

(Neo:4)

Funeka felt alienated at first, as she found herself amongst students from Botswana and Lesotho and local coloured students, and she did not feel able to socialise with them. After a fortnight, the recognition that there was another Xhosa speaking lady in the class

lent her confidence. In one of her final entries, Noluntu reflected back on a similar situation and on the difficulties facing local Xhosa speaking students:

During the two days of orientation in February, I met two ladies of my language. They were reluctant by the large Setswana and SeSotho speakers. They whispered to confirm whether I am a Xhosa speaker. The other groups find it difficult to socialise with us because they believe that we are monsters in the townships. I wish I can push that perception away, but how can I do so! On the 7th of May at 14.20pm the bus driver was ordered at gunpoint to hand over all the money, that Wednesday I arrived at 16.45 at the lecture which started at 16.00h. We delayed at the Khayelitsha police station. God had mercy on us they only took the money from the driver and did not touch us (passengers).

(Noluntu:October)

She had a certain perception of how South African townships were perceived by outsiders – as scary and crime-ridden – and, indeed, she relates an experience which confirms this apparent perception.

About a third of the cohort were from Botswana, and able to do this course full time as they were sent (and sponsored) by their Department of Education to improve their qualifications. Those from other southern African countries and the Eastern Cape were also able to study full time. Almost all of the local students were doing the course part-time, while maintaining their teaching jobs and having daily family responsibilities. This sometimes affected the journal relationship, with one or other of the partnership failing to keep up with entries or able to meet to hand their journals over to each other. Getting to know each other was often difficult for students; they felt very isolated due to being full time workers or from out of Cape Town, for example, Amy admitted that she had remained an outsider because she had not had the time to socialize with other students; she just came for her lectures and left immediately after them; she was purpose driven and had no time to simply chat. Those who were working full time whilst studying part time felt alienated and inferior. For part-timers, it was much more difficult to connect with the identity of being a student at UCT. The part timers sometimes tended to have negative feelings around the perceived freedoms of the full timers: around access to the library and the books there, the ability to form study groups and take part in class discussions, and the ability to study the readings.

The English language: *They talk too fast and blubber!*

Having to read, write and debate in the English language was a major cause of feelings of alienation and of not fitting in. For most of these students, English was not their mother tongue. They had been taught in their mother tongue for the first few years of schooling and learnt English as an additional language, but it became the language of instruction as they moved into high school.

Some of the students from Botswana felt that their language of instruction being different from their home language was simply not a problem; they had been schooled in English. In fact, in some of their schools, speaking in their mother tongue in class or socially at school, was frowned upon.

In schools with strong English Language policies a teacher is not allowed to use Setswana. If a student is sent to the staff-room and speaks Setswana it was a policy to ignore such a student until they spoke English. This was an advantage to the students because it made them practise the language and ultimately some of them began to realise that the policy was not meant to punish or pin them down. Their English improved dramatically.

(Yanga:7)

Foreign black students felt they were just expected (by other black students) to understand local African languages, and that local students spoke their own languages, not seeming to be concerned whether foreign students understood them or not.

For locals whose mother tongue was not English, language was, indeed, seen as a barrier. Sibahle related that in her primary school, all her teachers were Xhosa speakers and they only used English in the English period and would still code switch to Xhosa if the pupils did not understand them. However, in her high school there were very few Xhosa speaking teachers and she struggled in all her subjects as a result. In addition, some of their teachers themselves had communicated poorly in English, which led to various perceived problems. For example, Ayanda felt cheated because his physical science teacher in grade 10 read the textbook to them, including the experiments. He said that his teacher explained the concepts to the class in Xhosa and thus did not expose them to the academic language of instruction. He believed that this has disabled him in being able to explain things verbally or in writing in English, even when he understands them.

Many of the South African students explained that because they were not confident with English, their participation in class discussions was limited and they tended to remain silent. They also sometimes failed to grasp meaning from their lecturers or readings, and found it especially difficult to understand when academic jargon or ‘a high level of academic fluency’ (Lendy:3), was used. Students also commented that the lecturers’ accents and speed of talking was problematic to follow and contributed to their struggles to grasp concepts during lectures. Pheko complained, ‘They are too fast when they speak or blubber words’ (Pheko:4). Some of the foreign students found it difficult to understand lecturers who were not English first language speakers:

It is true my dear, non-native English speakers are working over-time. Hence their work is always classified as substandard, in English circles. The worst nightmare is when you meet a non-native English speaking lecturer. Here you have to learn that person's intonation accent, pronunciation and many other attributes of speech for you to go along with the lectures. This means a great part of the module will be covered before one acclimatises with the lecturer's speech. (Neo:4)

As a result of such language barriers/discomforts, much was written about difficulties in understanding and in explaining concepts and ideas in English, especially in writing. Ayanda wrote that students who have English as an additional language, struggle to interrogate, reflect and understand the texts that they are expected to engage with at university. Athi wrote that comprehending and grasping concepts is more difficult in a language one does not feel comfortable with and that he was much slower than students who were at ease with English because he had to think using his first language and then translate his thoughts or ideas into English and then on paper, which was ‘a perpetual struggle’ for him. Lungisa felt that language was a barrier to his ability to achieve, and believed that if he was able to write assignments in his own language, it would be possible to get high marks and that not enough consideration was given to this by the institution.

In our course, we encouraged students to use their own languages in discussions (unfortunately, I am limited in being able to assess assignments in other languages). As the course progressed, students wrote about the advantages of this. Mpho pointed out that being able to discuss concepts and readings with her group in their home language helped clarify meanings and messages and thus worked for the group (who all shared the same

mother tongue). It also seems that there was sometimes comfort in the knowledge that others were in the same boat and that support was available.

The Academic game – its culture: *It is better to keep quiet so as to avoid making a fool of myself*

Other reasons given for not fitting in were the perceived disadvantages in their educational backgrounds and previous learning habits or ways of being taught. Gadija stated, ‘Our previous learning, experiences and rich cultures seemed inappropriate’ (Gadija:3). Ayanda raised the question of why most writers deemed to have authority have an English or European background and that they refer only to other authorities from the same background. He continued to point out that the majority of South Africans are expected to study literature written by people who grew up in very different social environments from themselves. And he talked of the privileged practices and identities at higher educational institutions that support Western attitudes, which Africans have to adopt in order to fit in; he continued, ‘Our wealth of experience which we bring along with us to the institution and which constitute our identity is considered alien and is devalued by the institutions’ (Ayanda:5). He also wrote that during his schooling there were no literacy events that encouraged discussions or intellectual communications around a text.

Many of them believed that mainstream students would perform better because they had been exposed to the required genres and skills such as note-taking in their previous education, as well as more skilled means of engaging with texts and reflecting on them.

A lot of these students found it difficult coming to understand and adjust to the academic culture, and found that lecturers had high expectations of them and made assumptions in terms of their knowledge and abilities, and many felt demoralised because of this, especially after receiving their first assignments back. Vuyiswa wrote that, on receiving her first two assignments back, she almost packed her bags and returned home, due to the marks and the feedback she had received from her lecturer. Our first assignment had caused much anxiety, both in preparing for it and with the feedback and/or mark. Students commented that they found they had not understood what exactly was required

in written essays, and that the fact that many of them had not written essays for over 15 years had not been taken into consideration. Thobela wrote that he had regarded his first assignment as a simple task, but on getting it back was confused about what was actually expected of him in his written work. Although he had not failed it, he claimed the incident left him perplexed, upset and very resentful and that it totally demoralised him. He had thought of going to the lecturer concerned to discuss it but gave up on the idea and repeatedly asked himself about his capabilities for further assignments, and began questioning his own destiny at the institution.

Fitting into the academic culture was not felt to be natural;

I tend to withdraw and feel that it is better to keep quiet so as to avoid making a fool of myself. ...I feel that my knowledge might be inferior to those who are part of the academic culture. I also feel that my command of the English language at times has been a weakness. (Kevin:3)

Even the actual concept of a lecture was strange; 'The lecturer is more like in a one-way conversation, if there is such a thing. You are left with the feeling that the real thing (lecture) has not started yet' (Qagamba:3). Mpho complained that, after grappling with getting used to an individual lecturer's style, accent or speed of delivery, there was a change to a new lecturer.

The pace at which we are moving at ...my dear, its so fast. You know some lecturers are so fast in talking so much that at times I just get out of the class without having heard a thing. Some of the lecturers are so soft that at times I do not hear what they say. (Mpho:3)

Funeka wrote of her frustration that the university expected mature students 'to have all the writing skills' and that it ignored their cultural writing background (she probably meant previous writing practices), which was not academic. Siya mentioned that, although (they were under the impression that) the university hoped to build on knowledge already possessed by students, in fact, they were ill-prepared to cope with the type of 'advanced academic writing' practised at university, which was very different from that practised at school. He added that they had not been exposed to referencing in their secondary education and so most of them 'needed a crash course in referencing'. He wrote that he had never gone into the business of writing as a career or hobby and had only written business letters or official documents. Experiences in writing in terms of the

types of writing students had been practicing since their schooling, usually involved official letters, administrative reports, or, sometimes, text books. As a Maths teacher, Vuyo had believed that he did not need good English or good writing skills and he stated that the only writing he did was official letters, which tended to be brief and specific (and formulaic). Amy, also a Maths teacher, explained that she did not have a history of writing, except in the preparation of worksheets, reports for school magazines, booklets and information relating to teaching. A couple of the school principals in the class mentioned that they had their secretaries do all the writing that was required of them. There had seldom been much practise at academic writing for these students, recently or if at all. Jacky explained that as she had been teaching at a primary level for eight years, writing was a rather removed concept for her. None of those who were not language teachers mentioned any writing involved in their own teaching.

Of those whose taught subjects did require writing, again, some realised that as teachers, they were repeating inappropriate attitudes, practices or lessons, for example, in how writing was to be crafted and presented. Gugu confessed that she had never sat down and planned to teach her students about how to write. When her students handed in their work, she simply ‘marked their ideas’. There was no concept of writing as a social practice or a communication from one person to another, or to others.

Usually at school, the ‘voices’ to be incorporated into one’s (educational /academic) writing have been those of the teacher and the textbook (usually only one per subject) only (especially in poorly resourced schools). There had usually been little need for a concentration of referencing – as the teacher and student both knew where the information was from, and there had been little need to think critically about what was given by the teacher or the textbook – questioning the truth of either of these would not get the student a pass, and would often be regarded as rude or deviant behaviour. So critical thinking, questioning (to/beyond an extent), and considering different viewpoints (or that there are such), is usually left as an un-mastered skill. In fact, consider the jolt to the values of students in the transition from school to university, where critical thinking and questioning at school may have been regarded as deviant or unacceptable, these

abilities are suddenly lauded and definitely required at university – well, in the Arts and Humanities faculties at least.

For such students, the reading requirements at this institution often entailed a radical change of habits – in terms of how a text is read, what is read and what is done with what is read. Often, they had had little practise at reading whole books, chapters or articles. For example, Zimasa related her old reading habits at a previous post school institution, where the reading was mediated by the lecturer. She explained that the lecturer would pick out the important points in a reading and then move on to others, which was in contrast to the large quantity of readings students had to do on their own at this institution, before engaging in various activities around the readings. Phumla mentioned that she had had to read the longest text in thirteen years when preparing for her classes here. She found this extremely hard as she was out of practice, but she took comfort in the potential of learning how to do this and thought that the reading would ‘open me up’. Ravi also found reading was hard because she had had little practise; she found the amount of reading expected of her at university to be overwhelming and really struggled with some of the readings, ‘so much that when I read them for the first time I would think that they are irrelevant to the course’. Fortunately, she had joined a hard working group who read the course texts together and discussed them. In addition, she wrote that she had followed my advice to practise reading so as to improve her English and became addicted to Danielle Steel’s novels.

The availability of time in which to read was a big factor. Many of those who were still working while studying found it difficult to make time for their readings, despite knowing that they would benefit from doing the reading. Time taken to manage the readings also proved an issue, sometimes due to the need to look up meanings of unknown words, and sometimes, simply that it took a long time to absorb and understand the content of the readings.

Dealing with the readings often engendered feelings of alienation in students – often due to their struggles with English or with having to understand the academic language used.

Every time I read I struggle with my reading. I am not even confident to give a summary of what I have read if I am asked to. When the reading is hard to understand I take a lot of time trying to guess what it is all about. This takes too much of my time. If I come across difficult words I also spend time trying to find the meanings from the dictionary. I think what sometimes make things difficult is because the readings are in my second language because if the reading is in my mother tongue I do not have any problem. (Gugu:6)

Some felt that the readings were too difficult for them to understand on their own, whether due to the language or to the complexity of the ideas or content. This could result in behaviour whereby they avoided tackling them on their own, for example, Pedro mentioned that he depended on the discussions in lectures and tutorials around the readings in order to make sense of them.

The Academic game – its discourse: *Universities are notorious for hiding concepts and meanings behind big academic vocabulary words that make one feel alone and small*

Even after the English language barrier, there were further filters to sift through: the casual discourse of the institution:

I find the ‘lingo’ on campus astoundingly different, new and somewhat strange. Take for example the abbreviations used, e.g. ‘dp’ – sounds like a politically motivated phrase and should have no place at a supposedly neutral institution. Then to find out the true meaning and sigh with relief. . . I can achieve that! Such is the term ‘*Academic Literacy*’ – sounds daunting and could be misconstrued to be some conspiracy to rid the campus of the ordinary Joe & Suzy Soap. (Sue:1)

(‘DP’ in South Africa is commonly understood to stand for Democratic Party; ‘dp’ at the institution here refers to ‘duly performed’ certificate), and the more intimidating academic discourse; a Setswana speaker, Zimasa, wrote,

Some of the readings that we were given were also difficult to read. They had words such as discourse, genre, academic literacy and literacy practices and many new words I was not familiar with. (Zimasa:RE)

Although only a few of the cohort felt competent in the English language, whether or not they had been taught in English at school, almost all of them felt alien due to not being acquainted with academic discourse, an even with a higher language requirement level. As Gadija, whose home language *was* English, explained, writing in the academic style was completely foreign: ‘We were in an environment where we were expected to adopt a discourse without any kind of prior preparation’ (Gadija:2). She pointed out that this

affected their self-esteem and confidence in their ability as learners and resulted sometimes in ‘desperate learning strategies such as rote learning, plagiarism and the inability to express one's voice in written work’. She had also found it difficult to understand the readings due to their language styles.

I often became irritated with the style of writing — surely the content could be stated in simpler terms? My assignments were expected to be written in this same style — how was I to adopt a discourse that I did not fit into? I often found that I had to read and reread an article before it made sense and I felt that I had to get it right the first time. There was much frustration. I really felt quite isolated. (Gadija:1)

They were also concerned about the language and vocabulary that they used in their own academic writing. Yanga wrote of his experiences of receiving a draft of an essay back, in which his language had been ‘corrected’:

English being my second language I had fears in academic language to be used at University level... Some of the language I would use I realized that it was unacceptable academically for example to beef up; boys were bullying girls in class. These were things I went through and they came known to me through this course. The use of the word ‘like’ as compared to for example I had thought it was the same only to find my drafts with red marks canceling those. (Yanga:RE4)

In her assignment, discussing perceived needs regarding enabling access to students in higher education, Nomonde wrote of her own anxieties at the beginning of the year in complying with the ‘set’ way of constructing essays and putting ideas across, and being able to cope with the work. She saw these rules as a means of creating barriers rather than enabling students in the institution:

As Universities are notorious for hiding concepts and meanings behind big academic vocabulary words that make one feel alone and small ...Is it really necessary to have an academic language which is not used in real life situations or is it another way of distancing students from lecturers? (Nomonde:ass1)

Generally, the requirements for writing in an academic discourse and style were seen as a means of separating out those who were to be made to feel welcome and those who were not to belong.

Students often mentioned that they ‘ran out of words’ for long essays (meaning that they had no more to say) or that, due to their lack of (academic) vocabulary, they were not able to state their argument clearly. However, I think that, although this was seen by students as a language issue, I suspect it was rather an issue of academic genres and their

game of discursive engagement. The journals were felt to be easier to write in terms of language, being more casual (which enabled ‘more words’).

As intimated by earlier quotes, the language used in their readings also proved difficult to cope with. A lot of students complained that they had to constantly consult their dictionary when trying to comprehend their readings, which took the enjoyment out of reading and made them loathe the exercise. They appeared to do this rather than try to work out the meanings of words from their context. This must be harder in a second language. Nomonde’s perception of the evident hostility in the use of academic terms and discourse comes across here again:

My problem with studying is my lack of concentration and more often than not ‘drifting away’ and daydreaming about other things. This is especially true when the text is dull and uninviting, also when the language used requires constant visits to my Dictionary, I lose interest and become detached. This is one of my problems with academic language. Researchers, authors and lecturers sometimes seem to go all out to find the most difficult terms when trying to put even a simple concept/point across. (Nomonde:2)

Neo expressed a feeling of overwhelmed-ness at the bulk and density of his readings and assignments, and embarrassment at not being able to understand the readings:

I am trying to read but it is difficult. The spirit is there but the will is tired. There is too much literature in my hands but it is difficult to know where to start. My assignments are too many that I do not even know where to start and there is no more breathing space. This is very embarrassing my sister. How can a man of my age my calibre and of my ability complain about reading and not understanding. (PR7to:Neo)

Technology: *The institution did not state that the students should be computer literate*

The technological availability and required expertise of the new institution was also a big barrier – and a big breakthrough for many of the students. Access to, and knowledge of technology created easy divisions amongst class members. Amy and her partner corresponded over the email and stated that they preferred it as it was more convenient. In fact, Amy was one of the few who made a lot of use of email as she had a computer of her own, so she sent me regular queries and requests for reading of her drafts or drop-in consultations. The majority of students did not have their own computers and relied on computer labs where they were required to buy units on their student cards in order to pay for any downloading they did. Often the only access to a computer was on campus, which

meant limited time to use it, and often frustrations around computer crashes and lost discs as well as late submission of assignments. Even in this modern era of technology these commodities are luxuries to some of us.

At my school there are only 2 computers one for our clerks and one is in the principal's office ...It is difficult when I have to do assignment because I didn't type before I have to pay a lot for my assignment. (Sibahle:July)

It was also a barrier in terms of initial accessibility to computers due to lack of skills. Some students lacked understanding of how to use a word-processor, email and search engines.

Computer was another thing that I was struggling with at the beginning of the year. I came to UCT knowing nothing about computers, I computer illiterate. I couldn't open up a computer. The worst thing was to type. I use to ask and pay someone to type my assignments. But now with the help from the course and the tutors at computer lab where we were engaged on computer lectures everything became easy to me. I gained a lot and my life has changed, I can use a computer, type my own assignments. I am able to send emails to my lecturer and friends. (Funeka:CI,June)

Godwin wrote that he had been afraid to touch the computers at the beginning of the year and Mpho related how difficult and frustrating life felt due to having to get used to all the machines on campus, it being taken for granted by the institution that all students knew how to operate them; she commented 'life here is very fast every person is for him/herself'.

A few mentioned that it was their secretaries who did their typing and so they had had no need to learn to do word-processing. Some mentioned that they paid other students to type up their essays. A number of students wrote that they had paid others to type out their assignments at first.

Apart from needing to learn how to do word processing, they had to learn how to access information over the internet. They felt that this lack of access lost them marks for their assignments in the initial weeks. This caused further feelings of alienation.

First the institution did not state that the students should be computer literate and this sort of thing puts them under pressure and unable to fit in the school community. (Yanga:RE2)

Computer training was offered but it took some time for students to adjust to this. Computer-related terminology had to come to be understood by students: terms such as ‘formatting’ discs, and ‘use one and a half spacing’ were often concepts that students were unacquainted with. Sometimes students inadvertently lost the assignments that they had typed on the computer, or for some reason could not retrieve them, which led them on frustrating journeys in search of help.

I stupidly clicked the Format, then it wiped out the whole disk containing all my assignments, but somebody tried to retrieve it only to discover that it’s in UNICODE format. I was then reffered NASHUA, then XEROX, then to somebody who has XP (or sthing like that).... Eventually I was just told IT CAN’T BE DONE! But the BOTTOM LINE is now that I must REDO the whole assignment again. (Nomonde:email,May)

There was, however, much delight at the discovery of what, in fact, could be done on the computer. Noluntu was very proud when she was able to type a 4-page assignment, and Qagamba when she could attach a file to an email on her own. Yanga discovered the auto-correct feature in the word-processing package:

The question of omission of some words in the assignment was there but I knew after completing it I will read and correct it, only to realize later that I can use the computer to correct such mistakes. It underlined some words in green and red colours but at first I never knew what that meant and how to attend to it. (Yanga:RE,October)

Somewhat into the course, Noluntu expressed her gratitude for the support and technological know-how she had gained whilst at the institution:

I want to thank the Higher Institution for developing the strengths we already have. We could make flash cards and charts when we came but now I am grateful there is the Knowledge Commons and the Document Centre, which assist us to make teaching aids which will last for life. We will no more worry about space in the classrooms – we store everything in disks. This wonderful material is easy to print out and share among other staff members. It was difficult to share the mad made drawings/pictures. (Noluntu:10)

Most picked up computer skills through the year.

Library: *We were not even familiar with libraries at high school levels*

The library was often a new and overwhelming but exciting discovery. Students had seldom experienced a well-equipped library prior to their arrival at the institution. Not many of their home communities had libraries. Those in their own schools were usually non-functional; Yonela related that, before an American student had come to teach at her school and helped the school to open their library, it had functioned as a store room. The libraries in their teacher training colleges were described as simply containing a bit of

children's literature for them to use in learning to become teachers. As a result, they were not practised at using a library or sifting through resources and selecting some (as opposed to getting the little of what there was there as the total collection).

I can say I have struggled a lot because we were not even familiar with libraries at high school levels there were no libraries in our locations. Unlike here my grade 3 child has got the card to go to Library to look for a variety of books. (Sibahle:3)

Khatu wrote me an email after he had left and was studying for a Master's degree at his university in Botswana, which is illustrative of the contrasts that still exist between the more elite and the historically black higher educational institutions in the Southern hemisphere:

Our local university is the exact opposite of UCT in many ways. The library is a modern building but with empty shelves, students keep their bags outside the library, the noise in the library is frightening, security guards are the ones literally in control of the running of the library, reading tables are designed like dining tables, there are very few computers which more often than not are not working. We prefer going to private internet cafes in town. (Khatu:email)

Assumptions by the institution (lecturers, colleagues, rules and handbooks) that students knew the workings of the library (and its technology) and how to use them, added to feelings of alienation.

In the college they used to write the number of the book that a person want on the big paper, that paper show by arrow where you can find the book you want on the library. So I didn't struggle because I used to check the number of book that I want by looking on the big paper and the library was not big as this one. I didn't use the journal while I was on the college so I taught I know how to for a research. But when I arrived in University of Cape Town the things were completely change. The was no big paper where you can check which shelf you can find the book. All the things are computerize. If you want a certain book you must use the computers here. It was my first time to hear about the journal article in this Institution. (Goodwin)

There was one orientation session offered here, but it was brief, the technological instruction in it was found to be frustrating for some and it was not much of a hands-on session; the lack of basic knowledge of computers of many of the students was overlooked.

What frustrated me further was the fact that many of the students attending the lecture didn't have the necessary computer capabilities (one asked how to copy and paste!) that the lecturers assumed were present. They therefore clicked away on the screen, assuming that everyone in the room knew exactly what they were talking about. (Sue:10)

As a result, we ended up doing a couple of orientation sessions around the library with our students. This included instructions on how to use the computers there to search for

books in the library and for on-line journals. There was relief expressed at being able to know where to go to look for books.

The visit to the library made things really clearer. The modern technology, the computers upstairs. After the visit I even went to the basement, an area which I was never aware of and I discovered a very quiet place to study besides the journals which are found there.

(Noluntu:RE,May)

Being able to find information they were looking for was a great confidence booster;

The realisation when visiting the library that there is so much literature to be found on any given topic is at times totally mind-boggling. My self-esteem is boosted when I find information that I find relating to the topic which is relevant for an assignment.

(Pedro:RE1)

Finding that they could, and how to, access information on-line was felt to be an enriching lesson. A number of students who had used computers before wrote that they were unacquainted with (academic) journals available on-line and that their standard means of obtaining information for their essays was through the Google search engine.

Searching for information from the library was also an area in which they relied on each other – getting help from their journal partners, or forming a group to learn about the library together. This was done whilst working on the literature review assignment. Students sometimes took a while to feel competent in using the library related technology. The computer search engine feature in the library was found by many to be complicated, and students often mentioned that they felt awkward about bothering the librarians repeatedly.

Some days I would go to the library all the way from Kraaifontein but I will not get what I really want because in the library they will only show you how to search for a literature and they will tell you that they were not allowed to search for you. I became not sure if I must continue with my topic or change it.

(Lungisa:September)

The actual process of searching for books that may contain information relevant to their essay or research topics yielded further lessons. In the following extract from Zukisani's journal, he relates his need to become acquainted with the concept of 'scaffolding' – a focus of his upcoming assignment. His initial attempt to find out about the concept took him in the wrong direction. His reflections indicate a pulling out of random bits of information he had picked up related to the concept, but not a cognate understanding of the concept, (nor of the assignment as a whole).

My next assignment is on scaffolding activity.

The topic appears unfamiliar to me. I am still wondering what scaffolding is all about. When I went to the library to search for scaffolding, I came across one book. To my surprise when I searched for the book on the shelves, I realized that it was a novel about South Africa during apartheid regime.

My aim is to find out what scaffolding is, which books are dealing with scaffolding. I am supposed to make a class activity using scaffolding. From hearsays, I am told that scaffolding is very interesting and it's associated with Bruner and Vygotsky. I am therefore looking forward to make an interesting class activities using scaffold. The value of this assignment is to prepare class activities which can stimulate the student's critical thinking. The assignment also prepares me on how to handle different students with different learning problems. (Zukisani:11)

Viwe, at one point, advised her partner, who was struggling with writing very long sentences, to go to the library 'to select the English Grammar books and read them'! Another student wrote that when searching in the library, she expected to find books or literature dealing precisely with the topic she wanted to work on and that it she 'discovered after a long fruitless search, that parts of a topic could be found in a book with a title completely different from it' (Qagamba:14). At the end of the year, however, this student wrote of the marvels of the internet, which had been 'a real eye-opener' for her. She was delighted that she could now find information on her own, rather than having to approach people in the library for help, which she had found intimidating. Other students also wrote of their pleasure in learning about the resources offered by the library and how to search for information on the internet. There were expressions of great discoveries upon the extent of possibilities realised through search engines and the ability to communicate with other libraries and borrow items from them. For example:

I discovered that much of the reading material can be perused electronically through the computer unlike going to the library. Most of the journals can be obtained throughout the global libraries of the world, irrespective of where you are, in cyberspace. What impressed me is that one can loan a book from other countries, universities, electronically depending on availability or access. One can even send the information of a particular subject to his/her own computer by e-mail address. (Khubani:July)

The study on the use of the computer to search information on different sources was fascinating. It is really true that the books and journals we see in the library are just the tip of the ice berg but much material exists invisibly, electronically in cyberspace...Use of electronic media to access information in the air sounds weird. I have always heard of information on the internet but never accessed it till I got to UCT. (Lutho:July)

To get information you do not even need to get a lot of books from short loans, you just go to the internet and search for journals and the nice part is that through journals you are

going to get current information. But please be prepared to spend some money because you have to have units in order for you to download information. (PR14to:Phumla)

The library also posed a hurdle for locals, the part-time students, as it was still difficult to be able to get to the library in their scarce spare time. In fact, a couple mentioned that they eventually went to the library during their normal lecture times (missing their lectures).

I managed to get to the library a couple of times and actually got quite engrossed! Landed up reading all sorts of interesting things, totally unrelated to my actual topics of research, quite a chunk of valuable time, but then it was enriching! Also found some relevant ones and then found I did not know the procedures for photocopying!!! Had to, of course, ask and then was told to do all sorts of things to get credit and a pin number somewhere or other. As per usual, I had no clue as to where to find all these places, so landed up writing out heaps of things instead! I am always amazed at how these, seemingly obvious, things throw me and I lose all confidence. So another new experience awaits me! (Amy:15)

Others (usually those who stayed on or near the campus) enjoyed the opportunities the library offered and made the time to go to this quiet and enriching place to study.

When going to the library in the evenings and scanning through all the articles and journals, I have found this to be my best time for simply enjoying the university and the readings. I found that when opened to the possibilities of what is out there, I was given a new sense of purpose. (Marlon:RE4)

Other pressures: *At present I find myself with a full class load of 47 pupils and 7 classes to teach*

There were obviously also domestic pressures for students to deal with, as parents, spouses and teachers. Although the course was part time, many of the local students still worked full time. With lectures occurring in the late afternoons, it often proved difficult for these students to get to the university in time, or to juggle around running extramural activities or administrative or management duties at their schools, or collecting their own children from school, cooking the evening meal for their families, and feeling tired after a day's work.

Many an afternoon I came to the university for lectures as a very 'troubled' person. I went through many different crises in the past two months. I was on the verge of resigning from my key much needed job at school but I never felt that I wanted to give up at university. ...I've had a tough time with being everywhere where I was needed and coping with motherly, wifely, teacher, student and daughter chores that at times I just felt so 'burnt out' and tired. (Maggi:7)

Towards the end of the year, Lendy wrote that she was 'like a machine'; she arrived home just before 8 in the evening and had no time for leisure. Amy held a demanding post as head of department at her school, did sport with her pupils, ran extra classes for enrichment and did extra lessons to supplement her income.

Many of the locals relied on public transport. Ritsie struggled to attend classes after work; she claimed it took 3 hours of travelling each day. The final time for submission of assignments was 3pm and this was a problem because she could only get to the university after 4pm. She also found it hard to get to the library and home before nightfall. It was also difficult for the part time students with books being put in the short loan section of the library and only being available for a short time. At the end of semesters, when a number of major assignments were due, was also when they had to mark their pupils' exams and write reports. The mid-term vacation was spent in school meetings and training workshops by the part-timers:

I find it absolutely disheartening how the department of education can just claim our time for training and meetings. We really do need this time to rest, unwind and find the energy for the next term. (Jasmine:6)

There were also some uneasy dynamics amongst the class members. Time was precious for the working students and they felt it was wasted if, in the group discussions, all participants did not focus on the topic they had gathered to discuss.

What bugs me though are the demanding ways the African students from Botswana and Swaziland have. I hate it and it makes me to shrink back in my shell where I am safe and are not been exploited by them. When we have an assignment due, I have noticed that they like to join in when your group is discussing the work, but what is sad is to see how dishonest and selfish they are. When you ask them any question regarding the work. They also conveniently don't know.

My studies is very demanding. It takes up all my time except school-teaching time and pray time. I hardly get enough quality time in for my children, grandchildren and family and friends. The pain and struggle is a fruitful journey. One can just be enriched through it all. (Lendy:RE2)

Inevitably, there were also crises in the workplace, such as having to step in for ill principals or carry out other unforeseen work commitments. There were some hints at jealousies by colleagues or superiors at schools and subsequent heavier loads put onto these working students. Maggi told me that her principal had claimed that if she had the time to study as well, she could obviously take on more duties at the school. Maggi, who

had been granted special leave by the provincial Education Department to study three years previously, but had had it turned down by her school principal because she ‘was too important to the school’, decided to do the course part time while still teaching.

At present I find myself with a full class load of 47 pupils and 7 classes to teach. I am the only teacher with 7 classes and I find this very demoralising. Also, I get no support from the principal even though he knows that I am studying part-time and am often called upon to serve in various extra-mural activities. Very often I have to rush to classes as no privileges must be granted or asked by me. (Maggi:14)

Perceptions of fitting in: *I felt unsure of myself, as to where exactly I fitted in*

A lot of the students felt they had ‘fitted in’ by the end of the year, usually in terms of their developed skills, evidences of these, understanding what was expected and resultant growing confidences. In her final reflection, Gugu claimed that the literature review task was the best part of the Academic literacy course as she had not known that she could write and really make her voice heard, and she wanted to do the research methods course the following year. In his final reflection, Yanga wrote that he felt much better about academic writing and that reading (academic articles) had also shed light on how to write in the same way. Others wrote of coming to understand the role they played in coming to fit in:

There were a lot of things which I felt filled in pieces of a puzzle for me about genres and about access to academic life. I have mentioned previously my own feelings towards academia and how I perceived academic life to be elitist and a bit removed from the reality of our world. (Marlon:3)

It has taken me a couple of months, where I felt unsure of myself, as to where exactly I fitted in, but now I can with confidence say that I have found my niche. I was gobsmacked when I realised that it was up to me; it is you who allow yourself depending on the amount of effort you make, to ‘come in’ or ‘stay out’. (Maggi:17)

A number of students expressed gratitude for the opportunities to get to know each other through group discussions, peer reading and journal partners. Through these, gradually they came to learn about each others’ cultures. During a session on multilingualism, there was an excited class debate and this served to break down some of these barriers:

When each language group interacted in lively discussion, expressing their thoughts and giving their own interpretation of certain concepts as they understood it, our interest in each other took on a whole new perspective. With more group discussion in the future, I am sure that our understanding of each other’s views and viewpoints will be broadened and our own appreciation of someone else’s language gained. (Hettie:9)

In his written response to his partner, Khatu commented that through this course, they had learnt *that all people are human beings because in their culture there is a line between black and white*. (I noticed that often, white people were referred to as ‘others’ in their journals.)

I have never realized I was struggling with my English until I came to this university. My social and educational backgrounds are a contributory factor to this problem. My parents are illiterate so I did not grow up in an environment that was immersed with written text. I only had a book to read when I was at school and neither of the schools that I attended promoted independent reading. In UCT, the only way to survive is to do literature search and read. During the course we were issued with readings to read and reflect on every week. This was a hectic exercise for me because of my background but I realised later that it was a real blessing because as the years unfolded I reaped the benefits of that tedious exercise. My love for reading gradually developed because the articles were very interesting, relevant to my career, and they served as an addition to the tutorials on literacy practices. The lecturers advised us that reading group was ideal, I formed one together with my colleagues and it worked wonders. We read the readings together sometimes and reflect on them verbally. We even at times understood the readings through translation to our native language. My writing was improved by frequent journal writing. This helped me also because I developed the love for writing as well. (Ravi:RE)

Having described the selves brought to the institution in the students and given some insights into conflicts between the socially constructed practices around literacy from which they have come and those of the institution at which they have arrived, (or to which they will be migrating). I now move to an analysis of the presentation of their selves in their literacy practices at the institution.

Chapter 6

Bringing in the self: Discourse and voice

The last chapter considered aspects of selves that students brought to their learning at this institution - their 'autobiographical self' (cf. Clark & Ivanič, 1997; Ivanič, 1998; Ivanič & Weldon, 1999). This chapter focuses on issues related to students' sense of self as writers from two aspects, both of which could be contained in Clark and Ivanič's concept of the 'discoursal self' (1997; Ivanič, 1998). The next chapter continues this process by considering the development of 'self as author' (cf. Clark & Ivanič, 1997; Ivanič, 1998; Ivanič & Weldon, 1999). In this chapter, firstly, I discuss students' discourse styles in their journal writing (with some references to their academic writing). I then examine their understandings of the use of voices and the convention of referencing in the academic culture. Both of these issues relate to how the self is presented: the 'discoursal self'. Both are analysed in relation to a sense of self, voice and agency. The first section here is an analysis of their journal writing, and the second an analysis of what they have narrated in their journals with regards to referencing and voice.

Presentation of the self in journal writing: Discourse styles

'Voice' and 'agency' are both multifaceted and multilayered concepts in learning and writing, as I have discussed in Chapter 2. Voice is also referred to in discussions on the style or stance of writing and this can affect the visibility of the agency. The discourse style that is adopted by a writer gives a picture of the 'personality' of the voice adopted, the self that is presented, and the agency that is visible.

I have pointed out that journal writing is different from academic writing. However, in this chapter I am looking at the discourse styles in the journal writing as providing an initial view into students' conceptions and presentations of their selves and the extent of agency these allow for. The journal writing is a reflective exercise, requiring students' considerations of their senses of selves as learners and writers. My focus here is on students' journal writing – a different genre from the academic essay. The academic conventions, such as specific structure, formal style, and referencing conventions, were not a requirement in the journal writing. (By 'genre', I am referring to a type or category of writing; examples are the report, the sermon and the academic

essay. By ‘style’ I mean the way in which the author writes, for example, using a formal style, an informal or chatty style, or an instructive style.)

It is worth bearing in mind that journal writing was, for almost all of the students, a new concept and an unpractised activity or medium. Especially at the beginning, students approached it warily. Many were unsure about the task in terms of what it was for and how it was to be judged, and, understandably, how, or where to gear it: their partner – a fellow student whom they may or may not know, or their lecturer – at the beginning, a stranger in a strange environment with traditions and relationships that they may or may not be acquainted with in a seemingly superior institution of higher education. In most cases, the writing styles in the journals were similar to those in their academic assignments at first. As time went on, and the students got to know each other and ourselves, and became more acquainted with the expectations and requirements of their different tasks, their journal writing became more relaxed in flow and more discursive, and their academic writing more formal.

In terms of styles of discourse in students’ writing in their journal entries, there were a few trends that stood out, each of which may provide ideas about the author’s conception of their audience and sense of self (as author) and their anticipated and perceived engagement and interaction between reader and writer in their writing. These trends could also relate to attitudes towards their learning and to issues of agency within their learning. The most common tendencies in discourse styles of the students’ journal writing were those that could be described as belonging to the instructive, motivational or oratory types, and those that were of an administrative or business type. These were both more than likely a result of habits from their writer’s professional lives. Liebowitz (2005) uses the term ‘residual voices’, to refer to voices brought in from other roles, such as teacher or lay-preacher. There were also styles which had been learnt through educational practices, for example, an old-scholastic style which tended towards overly formal quaint or archaic English, and those in which there was evidence of some acquaintance with, and understanding of, Western academic styles. These discourse styles are illustrated below.

An instructive or motivational discourse style

The instructional or motivational discourse styles, typical of classroom lessons, sermons or political oratory, overlap in that they are all instructive, filled with injunctions such as ‘you/we

should.../must.../ought to... and rich in emphases, such as *'It is essential.../ imperative...'*. These types of address are all implicative as performances for an audience, which is usually taken as being passive, a 'sitting' audience, rather than an audience that is expected to interact with the writer. However, I try to distinguish between the three instructive/motivational styles in my descriptions here.

Given the fact that most of the students were teachers, and many of them in school leadership positions, it is hardly surprising that these 'residual voices' were apparently in their writing here; much of the journal entries, the responses from partners, and even assignments were written in an instructive discourse style, initially at least. This is close to the oratory style that school principals may often use in order to give orders, instruct, or inform their audiences, to influence their behaviour and, on occasion, to tell stories in order to do so. In this discourse style, the reader is written *at* rather than *to*. It is as if the reader is expected to follow or obey the writer, rather than being invited to engage with the writer over what they have stated. Some of the characteristics that are evidence of this style are a preaching stance (which I illustrate below), or an instructive stance, with much use of injunctions such as, 'must' and 'should', which help to make the voice of the writer sound assertive – constructing themselves as a voice of authority, and the use of 'we', serving as a persuasive means of influencing behaviour with the idea that there is a standard or correct way in which members of the group (the audience), are to act (thus, also constructing behaviours). For example, in the following journal extract, Pearl writes advising parents what to do and then (involving herself as a member of the parent group), proceeds to expound on what needs to be done by these parents in order to secure a better future for their children. This is done in a list of short drumming sentences.

So, I would advise parents to become involved in their children's learning. We need to encourage and promote a reading culture amongst families. *Parents need* to break the silence by having more conversations with their children at home. ... At home and at school we need to encourage gender equality to ensure progress in our future societies. (Pearl:6) [my emphases]

The writing often reads like a speech in which the author does not expect to be questioned on what they say. There may be frequent use of rhetoric – persuasive language, such as 'parents need to break the silence by having more conversations with their children' – which, in a sense, pre-empts questioning of what the writer is stating. Also, ideas or words are used from others as

if they are the author's own. Often, there will be motivational and emotional or rhetorical conclusions, for example:

In conclusion the article observed that the finest teachers are born, not made, and no amount of training standards can produce a superb teacher out of someone who is not prepared to work with the children's minds, hopes and dreams. Many successful teachers knew when they were still young that teaching would be their future career. Indeed, teaching is a calling. Material benefits should be of little importance. Teachers should privilege the lives of the children, and stop treating teaching as a potential business investment. (Siya:September)

Both Siya's formal written assignments, as well as his journal entries make use of this motivational preaching style. For example, the style of writing in his literature review is of a similar nature to that of the journal extract above, its opening sentence being:

It is imperative that teachers should be aware of the true position of their profession and the factors that distinguish teaching from other professions like medicine and law. (Siya:LR)

His formal writing did become slightly more contained in terms of the focus on what is actually said in the texts he read. In his later written assignments, his pacing appeared to be more considered, where he paused occasionally to quote from a reading and comment on the idea.

The injunctions and emphases and use of rhetoric all lend this style an authoritative sounding timbre. However, it might mask the more humble sense of self as a learner. In other words, this discourse style espouses instructions supposedly based on the writer's assumed expertise. It does not allow for dialogue or the act of exploring, reflecting and considering different viewpoints.

What I have referred to as a preaching and pedantic style here could both be regarded as what Bakhtin (in Wersch, 2001) refers to as 'authoritative discourse', in that it 'demands our allegiance' rather than serves as a generator of meaning; it is transmitted rather than represented (Wersch, 2001:227). It is spoken out, rather than inwards – as internally persuasive dialogue (see Chapter 2). It is likely that many of the students may have come from a particular kind of church or Christian background or ethic in which this kind of sermonizing and instilling certain values is popular.

There are also didactic or instructive discourse styles in journal responses from partners, whereby the partner writes as a judge or assessor of the entry. This is seen, for example, where responses to partner entries are written as if they are expected (by us) to respond by picking out

what they think is missing; what *should* be included, rather than responding by paying attention or taking an interest in what has been written. Omphile's partner was a school principal. His first response was very pedantic:

1. Educational background: you have not mentioned the results of your primary and secondary school.
 2. What did your duties entail when you were doing your national service in 1984? In other words what standard were you teaching and what else were you involved in?
 3. At the college what subjects were you doing?
 4. Do you think it is still necessary to continue with your distance learning with the Zimbabwe Open University in view of the fact that you are now here?
- I think you took a wise decision by enrolling for this course because it is very relevant to your field. I encourage you to work hard so that you get the best out of it. (PR1to:Omphile)

With time, he moved away from such questions, but his commentaries in response to Omphile's entries remained distant and pedantic rather than relaxed, attentive dialogue. It is possible that there was a shadowed awareness that I was 'listening in', so he had to be 'correct'. The pedantic nature of this style is also seen where responses entail a confirmation of what has been done in the partner's entry and a brief formal 'message'.

I managed to go through your journal and I think the steps you have followed are relevant in literature review. You first related a topic for research, there after bisected it into subtopics. You vividly stated the reasons why you choose decision making. I wish you luck in your assignment. (PR4to:Omphile)

I hope the books and journals that you are perusing through would help you to tackle your topic well. In order to do well always consult your lecturers for tips and augmentation. (PR5to:Omphile)

(The use of the term, 'augmentation' here is an example of slight misunderstanding of how a formal English term is used; possibly a hangover from the missionary education, common in Botswana previously.) In this didactic style, a formal distance is maintained between the writer and the reader in the writing, and in fact, from the writing. Often this style of response showed more engagement with the journal partner as the journal exercise progressed and partners relaxed into it.

There is another common style, consisting of lengthy detail and emotive and grandiose statements: oratory, almost preaching, sometimes more religious, sometimes more political. As I have mentioned, a common habit is the use of 'we', and this in both journal entries and assignments. This is a powerful discursive manoeuvre, often used in order to give a sense of communal action that will make a difference, or as a means of influencing values, beliefs and

behaviours into a sense of community and sameness or consensus. For example, it *constructs* and includes the writer or speaker and audience as a superior or more moral grouping than others.

Below is the conclusion to Jasmine's literature review:

We stand at the threshold of very exciting possibilities, in our new democratic country and in our transforming schools. New policy creates space for greater autonomy, greater initiative, and more policy on the ground to be developed by teachers through the wisdom they have built up during years of experience. The success of transformational approach and leadership in our schools will depend to a large degree, on the extent to which our schools are able to discard old practices and take on the challenge of providing young people with the confidence to take up roles of leadership and responsibility in a new social order. All stakeholders need to be inspired and committed to playing their particular role in the process of reconstruction and development. (Jasmine: LR)

Here, she is including the reader in the excitement of pending change, she is informing the reader that new policy is good (without explaining what the new policy is), and she appeals to 'all stakeholders' for their inspiration and commitment to play their role in the reconstruction of the educational system, but she does not indicate the detail of the roles, transformations, the new social order, nor the actual changes that are needed. It is a very general conclusion that does not point to any detail. The implication is that this is the correct attitude for all to have.

Also common in these sermon-like entries, is the inclusion of a story with a lesson to it, a moral. It is interesting, however, considering how these are used in terms of the imagined audience, for example, Thato certainly often wrote with an audience in mind, but not an interactive one, a 'sitting' group. He as the writer maintained the power. His writing was definitely a performance and he could be entertaining, but there is something lost in his relationship with his audience. I draw from a series of his entries below.

Firstly, he wrote in the style of a narrative sermon, which reads as if he had left his audience behind and he had actually diverted from the prompt question (which asked what he understood by the term 'critical thinking'). He began his entry:

Now you have also started guys. Now asking us question which are not answerable. What is critical thinking? What do I understand about critical thinking? Oh No! I have never met that in my life time. To me, thinking is the proper use of one's brain. When your brains are discussing or debating or even observing something or any other activity which you wish to engage your brains in, will be seen as thinking. (Thato:3)

He then continued to relate a story involving a hare, a baboon and a lion, as if it is a moral tale, but the story does not appear to have anything to do with critical thinking. He concluded his entry as follows:

Now is there any thinking between the lion and the baboon. One might say there was very minimal thinking. These two guys were lazy to use their brains. The hare did not just want to interrupt the process he wanted a match for his brain. Now in this learning process, for learning to take place some thinking has to be done. This should be critical thinking not just casual thinking. Critical thinking must yield good results. Let me go back again and start to analyse those readings and come up with a better job on critical thinking. (Thato:3)

One could argue that this sermon-like entry was a (kneejerk) distractor from the reflective act of learning. (I am aware that in the Xhosa culture, traditionally, stories told by grandmas around the fire always had a moral or didactic purpose, and these were often Aesop/Uncle Remus type fables or parables involving a jackal (who was always the clever one), hare, baboon and so on. It seems that the moral was also spelt out to the children, rather than inferred.)

In the following entry, the style is still oratory or sermon-like – and entertaining, but now there is evidence of some thinking about issues. The use of his home language, Ndebele, as a heading here, serves as an appropriation of a cultural space (as does that of an ‘African story’ above). This is something Thesen (1997), would refer to as a conscious act of identity.

KUWE [Zukisani] O [Thato] YO¹

The other day I was looking at the subject of language, and then I realized that it was a fact that people think in one language and then speak in another.

It is common that in Southern Africa the language used as the medium of instruction in schools is English. English is a second language to all the black students in this part of the world. What is interesting most is that, their learning is conducted in English and they are forced to speak in English, but they are not forced to think in English. It means the school the teachers are already convinced that their students should be able to think in English.

Today in this university I am seeing plenty white students and plenty black students. One big question is how much interaction is taking place among these students, outside their lecture times. Among the white skinned guys I find Chinese speaking their Chinese language there Portuguese also doing the same there Afrikaners also there with their language so is the case with the black African students in their different linguistic groups. Now when is the English going to be practised so that people can seriously use it appropriately? It is even worse when you go for a lecture, it takes you the first 10 to 20 minutes listening to the lecturer trying to process what s/he is saying in English into your first language then back to English to process it for storage. (Thato:4)

He wrote his entries as personal letters, writing to his partner as an audience, but not quite an interactive one, where he was expecting dialogue, or attempting to work something out or

¹ How are you [Zukisani], it is [Thato] here

develop an understanding with his reader. He poses questions, but does not seem to anticipate reflective answers, nor does he attempt to reflect himself on answers to his question. His writing was a rambling stream of consciousness; a performance for his reader, rather than a dialogical communication. His voice was assertive and seemingly confident of his own position.

May I pause here for today because I have some other work to do. May I remind you that the next reading is next week. Come prepared for the discussions.

Thank you for listening or being my audience.

(Thato:6)

The following entry was one written during his literature review preparations. It is still preachy, in that it appears to have been directed for a 'sitting audience', whom he aimed to talk at, rather than interact with, but there is more of a sense of a *perceived* audience here:

Of late I have been reading about this subject they call philosophy. Oh! Oh this reminds me of one old man back home, he is always calling himself philosophy or sociology, psychology and many other ologies he can think of when he has taken one or too many. In this literature of philosophy I was struck by that I had not yet understood the concept of ethics. But only knowing that there is something I am missing in my way of life. I have just realized that it is true that some people may live the rest of their lives not realizing that they do not know their values. Hence that is why they are not principled. In Ndebele we say 'ophetshulwangumoya' meaning they just blow with the wind. That is the person who cannot take a stand on his own. ...

Revelations come while people are not aware of what is happening. Religion is a powerful tool in shaping one's ethics. Many people I am sure they just go to church blindly like that without really analyzing the morals and the major objectives to belong to that particular religion. Hence that is why Africans were swept out of their own religion to follow other people's religions. ... I have observed with clear conscience to these new African and black American mushrooming' Christian's churches. These Judeo Christian churches turned to be possessed by that unknown spirit. They lose their real vibe and pretend to be more holly than the holy spirit itself.

(Thato:LR prep)

However, he did distinguish between his genres, albeit thinly. (This capacity to distinguish between genres is a skill I was attempting to develop in the students.) There is a difference between his witty and anecdotal journal writing and his academic writing, which is logical and to the point. For example, in his final assignment for natural science and technology, where he wrote about current educational issues, he included references, posed questions, used more formal language and made use of theory. Although writing a formal academic essay, he still included personal anecdotes and made some preachy exhortations and generalizing statements that were not backed up by references to literature. Here are some extracts:

In this essay I discuss nine current issues, trends, developments, and challenges in science and technology with particular reference to high schools in Botswana....

Children's attitudes towards science

Mbajjorgu and Iloputaife (2001) provide legitimate answers to some of the questions that have been haunting the marginalized communities. For a long time I have admired science as

knowledge, and scientists as the developers of that knowledge. I wanted to be one, but I failed to understand how I could participate in that field. Later I realised that one of the reasons I failed to join the science field was the scientific stereotype that was inherently imbedded in my society. One common stereotype was that science is for intelligent people (Mbajiorgu and Iloputaife 2001:13).

...

Socioscientific issues

Society and science are not independent entities existing in two different worlds. They are intertwined, as one depends on other (Sadler and Zeidler 2002:34). These socioscientific issues are increasingly becoming more important in the field of science education. They have built an important component of the scientific literacy (Hodson 1995, cited in Sadler and Zeidler 2002:34).

...

The science education has a role to play in the imparting of necessary skills and competences to the citizenry to engage with the media practices. Therefore the science curriculum must be revised so that it includes those courses that incorporate the activities of the media operations; facilitate the usage of media apparatus and be able to sift appropriate information from the bulk. It is also the role of science education to empower the population at large with absolute information about the positive and negative effects of the media.

There is more careful flow here and more focus; the paragraphs build on one another and each paragraph is clearly built around one idea. There is a sense that the writer has an argument to develop and a point to make to the reader, so it appears that the reader is more 'considered' in what is written, for example, he explains what he will do in the essay; his anecdotes actually relate to the ideas he has related from his readings. In terms of his referencing, it is unclear when he was quoting and when he was paraphrasing his readings, and his reference list, whilst impressive, contained many readings that were not actually referred to in the text. Whilst he referred to his readings in a style that on the surface looks as if he has acquired the cultural capital for successful academic writing, he still resorted to exhortation typical of political or religious oratory discourse styles.

An administrative or business-like discourse style

On the other hand, there is a style that is more distancing of an audience, where the identity of the writer is completely masked. I refer to this style as an administrative or business-like one. In this kind of writing, it does not feel like the author-student's actual self was involved in what they were saying. Moreover, it seems they do not feel comfortable in relation to a reader; the reader is not considered. It is likely that most of the writing that these educators have had to do in the course of their recent work experiences has been in filling out administrative forms or record-keeping – usually to satisfy a condition of their work and not for any particularly interested reader. Linguistically, these pieces of writing entail a sense of brevity, little elaboration or explanation of statements, lists or bullets, and uneven flow in the writing. For example, there are

entries that hint at styles typical of formal or administrative documents, or teaching notes that teachers are likely to have done much of in the course of their work experiences, such as:

How do I find my view of knowledge

My knowledge is relevant to my work as it needs speech developing skills such as story telling, rhyming and reciting. It is simple and evident because the other learners need educators whom have obtained the Primary Open Learning Path module, SEN module and Pre-primary PTD, all these make me strong to handle the learners with learning impairments.

Literacy: The learners must be left with a feeling of contentment and their esteem must be developed after they have read my readings.

Writings

The writings must be at their level of understanding e.g. bigger letters with bright or attractive pictures for the foundation phase and for SMH learners.

Academic language

It must clear and critical. I must also use suitable words for the particular language. I must not slang. The learners must establish the relevant words in their minds. (Noluntu:2)

In this case, the headings serve to break the response to a prompt up into separate parts that appear to be unrelated; they stunt the flow between the sentences that follow them and the previous sentence.

On occasion, it seems that the purpose of the writing itself is blurred; there is no clarity as to why the writing is done or whom it is addressing, and there may be shifts in apparent intentions. Aspects such as the use of a passive voice (even with use of first person pronoun as in the extract above), lack of flow – with the written text consisting of lists, bullets, a sense of brevity in what is said and an absence of a perception of an interested reader, constrain a sense of reflection, engagement, agency and dialogue. It does not make it easy to respond or ‘converse’ with such entries. It is not as if a response from or dialogue with the reader is expected. The ‘voice’ is not necessarily assertive and not engaging.

An old scholastic discourse style

Another discourse style is one which I refer to as an old scholastic style, or what I regard as being an ‘adopted colonial’ one. The voice is formal and not personal. This style is also one in which little consideration of any audience is evident and where the writer appears to be more removed from their selves. The absence of a sense of the writer’s self is, perhaps, lost as a result of the writer trying to satisfy a perceived style that is not their own and that is one that they do not fully understand. This also lowers the possibility of establishing relationships or discussions with others (the readers). It is as if the writer has a perceived idea of what they should ‘sound’

like, or how they should come across, but has misunderstood the intricacies and/or codes involved. Typically here, the writing, sometimes tentative, begins with definitions and diversions and includes phrases such as ‘one may ask...’, supposedly anticipating questions or interest from the reader, but not actually conversing. It often contains tangential descriptions or definitions, and easily diverts from the line of argument or message.

Before giving my point of view about my understanding of academic literacy, academic writing, or academic language, it should be necessary to define firstval² two cardinal terms namely: writing and language. Language may be defined as a combination of sound and meaning whereas writing is to put sound and meaning into sign (Chomsky, 1957). Both terms aim at communicating. One may ask a question about the meaning of communication and this leads me to split the word in to two sets: on one hand we have speaker and writer, on the other hand we have audience composed of listener and reader. At the same time, an audience may be composed either of educated, not familiar, very important person such as: Professor, President, guest... Or of uneducated familiar, less important person as: friend, young brother. (Abonga:1)

Unlike the writing given in the example from that of Thato’s Literature Review above, here, there is a lack of a sense that the writer has a specific point to make. The idea of the purpose of writing as that of engaging in dialogue is actually difficult to pick up here, due to the apparent lack of direction in the writing, the ramblings around or lack of specific points being made. The ‘audience’ to the writing does not seem to be perceived of as more than an assessor of the writer’s grasp of content – as opposed to an interested co-responder. There appears to be a perception of what is entailed in intellectual rumination, viz. definition of concepts, questioning, analysis, and deconstruction of ideas. But it is as if these definitions and questioning are being done to demonstrate to the (marker/superior) reader the writer’s ability to do them, as opposed to the writing being truly dialogical; in other words, engaged in the process of constructing meaning for the writer’s self and sharing an interest with the reader: the journal partner.

An acquaintance with academic discourse and socially discursive styles

There was a fair amount of confident informal writing in the journals, usually from those who had the cultural capital. They were acquainted with the skills of (standard northern hemisphere) formal essay writing and were acquainted with (standard northern hemisphere) discursive discourse styles, and were therefore allowed the capacity to move between different genres and relationships with their readers. Depending on the level of acquaintance and understanding of academic writing, this tended to have a more comfortable timbre than the kind of ‘academic’

² Often, speakers of English as an additional language will spell words or terms as they hear them phonetically, such as ‘firstval’ for ‘first of all’.

writing style such as that used by Thato in the extract above. In comparison with the old scholastic style, there is more flow and a clearer sense of who the audience for the writing is. For example, Amy adopted a very chatty discourse in her journal entries. She appeared relaxed in this style and addressed her readers within her writing.

I am always pleasantly surprised when the ‘universe provides’. Once again I am referring to Lucia’s session this week on Visual Literacy. In English at the moment my students are doing a component on advertising. I have found the last two sessions with Lucia particularly relevant and could not have come at a better time. I incorporated ideas from both of her sessions into what I was doing, namely: Getting the children to find adverts that struck them visually and then explaining to us why this was so. I used the idea of visual images ‘telling’ us so much that often words are unable to do. Cathy, your point in the last response was also food for thought – how the people involved with text need to be so much more skilled at appealing to passive, yet often intellectual readers. So many people can see through the pseudo-science and jargon these days. The children were fascinated with the concept and then applied their own hand at creating an advert for an invented item. The results were stunning and very interesting. I was amazed at their ability to see ‘beyond’ the picture on the page. The questions Lucia gave us in conjunction with the images in our last lecture were a great help in shaping their thoughts in this regard. I have passed the idea and printout on to our History teacher as well as I feel this could be so beneficial to children working in this learning area. The feedback from the children has been very positive and some children have brought cuttings of newspaper articles, pictures and other adverts they have found, which they feel, are telling ‘a story’ through just an image. (Amy:15)

Amy was clearly more used to the discursive writing and Western academic style, and had a formidable vocabulary in comparison to her peers who did not have English as their mother tongue. She also appeared to be at ease with giving her opinion on the content. Below is part of the introduction and conclusion to her first assignment.

Lindfors argues that language plays a central role in constructing thought. She asks the question: ‘How does language contribute to cognitive growth?’ She uses Frank Smith’s approach, stating that every human builds, out of personal experience, a cognitive structure or ‘a theory of the world in the head’. Donaldson states that we try to actively interpret this world, to make sense of it. Lindfors asked if language helps us make sense of the world, if it assists us in learning and comprehension and makes us aware of our thinking. I think this is true, it certainly does help and assist us. This is particularly so once a child develops the ability to speak. However I wonder how much learning has taken place in a child prior to this skill being developed. Was language the central role for constructing thought? Perhaps it was visual, tactile and auditory perception? Were these not based on objects and events the young child experienced, encountered or with which chose to actively participate? I believe that a very young child mutually transacts with the environment. ... Thus I believe, to answer Lindfors’ initial question: Language does contribute to cognitive growth, however, I also believe Piaget is correct in maintaining that assimilation and accommodation play the central role in construction of thought. (Amy:Ass1)

In her final assignment, Amy’s references were more correct, she made a thesis statement at the beginning, which her content supported, it was a stronger and more cohesive argument, and there were no longer rhetorical questions posed.

In conclusion, I summarise these styles in terms of how the self is presented, consideration of the reader, their apparent attitude to debate and, borrowing ideas from Kalman (1999), the apparent purpose of the written text and the social consequences of the writing.

Through the instructive or motivational style, the self is presented as assertive, to be followed, and the 'voice' is an assertive one. The reader is seen as a passive 'listener' or follower of the text. Agreement is assumed rather than debate anticipated (debate might be regarded as crisis). The purpose of the text is to instruct or motivate, and the expected consequences to create agreement and a following. In the administrative or business-like style, the self is not presented; it does not appear to be important to the writing; the 'voice' is an absent one. There is little sense of a conceived reader, thus debate is not considered. The purpose of the writing is to fulfil a requirement, with the consequence of having the requirement fulfilled. With the old scholastic style, the self is hidden behind a perceived set of institutional requirements; the 'voice' is formal and respectful. The reader is a passive follower of the argument being written. There is operational agreement; debate is controlled. The purpose of the text is to illustrate knowledge and reflection, possibly for assessment purposes rather than purposes of debate or argument. The academic discourse style would present the self as engaging with other voices and the reader; an active potential dialogical partner and critical questioning and debate would be welcomed. The purpose of academic discourse is to share and engage in knowledge production and meaning making, with the intended consequences being increased understanding and further reflection. On the other hand, a discursive style would present the self as friendly and ready to engage with the reader; an interested potential interlocutor, the purpose being to share ideas and experiences, with further engagement as a consequence.

I would now like to turn to students' understandings around, and dealings with, the multitude of voices they have to present in their academic writing. In order for students to successfully articulate their own ideas, and distinguish them from the voices of others that they draw into their written dialogues and debates, they need to make use of the technique of referencing in their academic writing. Although the practice of referencing is essential to the successful clarity of presentation of self amongst others in academic writing, it is often unpractised in students'

social and professional lives. So, coming to understand the assets of referencing was often a chaotic endeavour on the part of the students. The student has to transition to a position in which they can present themselves as an authority amongst others.

Presentation of the self in academic writing: Referencing and voice³

Referencing skills contribute much to the emergence of voice in students' academic writing. Such skills have a bearing on the identity of learners as writers. In referring ideas to certain sources, the writer is able to distinguish voices of others, and in doing so, provide space for the hearing or establishment of their individual voice for the reader. However, an understanding of the rationale behind referencing, and taking on the techniques required for its conventions, often proves a complex and intimidating affair for students. There is much fear incited within learners by the convention of referencing, together with the scourge of plagiarism. Thus, rather than the learner being ensconced within the academic environment through being able to relate to and engage with other voices, thereby acquiring agency in their writing, issues around referencing can actually serve to alienate them from the academic environment and deter them from finding and taking on their own agency. It may involve much practise and discussion before students see referencing as an asset in their writing. This process can entail deconstructions, renegotiations and reconstructions of relationships with ideas and identities. This section focuses on the issue of referencing and its relationship to agency and voice in the development of an authorial identity for adult learners in the academic institution.

I explained in Chapter 2 that the 'voicing' required in academic writing, especially in the Arts and Humanities fields, is a complex procedure as it involves the weaving together of other voices, in addition to the student's own. These different voices are distinguished through the technique of referencing, which is specific to the academic world. This tradition of referencing is often a new or unpractised and confusing custom to adult learners.

From their journal entries, it was evident that one of the first things that students tend to pick up on entering the academic institution is the fact that they are likely to be caught out; most of them know that there is a mechanism in place for attributing ideas to their originators, and that

³ Parts of the content of this section, together with related literature and background information was included in an article written by myself, published in 2013 (Hutchings, 2013).

attached to this is the ‘offence’ of plagiarism; however, often they do not yet know the workings of this mechanism and live with the fear that if they were caught plagiarising, they might be accused of something close to ‘criminal behaviour’ and punished. This is an alienating welcome to the institution; immediately, it sets up a hierarchical distance between themselves and the established inhabitants and threatens an already fragile sense of identity within the environment, with the threat of being identified not only as outcasts, but as wrong-doers or sinners. It can also confront established sets of values and beliefs: they have come to this educational institution to share knowledge, but discover that knowledge, in fact, appears to be owned and guarded. This is illustrated in Athi’s reflection on his welcome to the university:

Another area that is very biased in this westernized literacy is the authority ship of the so-called professors who are at the advantage of every writer. Every field has its own politics, now the educated are claiming ownership of knowledge. Somebody has to sanction you to publish your own work. They have also strategically put plagiarism as a trapping stone for the underdeveloped or upcoming writers. They have cleverly declared plagiarism an academic crime. Because they have authority, they determine what goes into the market. (Athi:RE)

In their journals, students tended to use the terms ‘referencing’ and ‘plagiarism’ interchangeably, and they tended to focus more on the offence of plagiarism, rather than the act of referencing. This is perhaps the fault of the institution. It is likely that this preferential emphasis is implicit informally during instruction, but it is also stressed formally, for example, in the ‘Plagiarism declaration’ required to accompany the submission of each written essay. Plagiarism and referencing are often spoken about together by academics as well – unfairly: referencing is a technique within academic writing; plagiarism is a transgression – an intended falsitude. Failure to reference properly is likely in learners new to the institution due to lack of knowledge and understanding around the practice – the how and why, rather than an intention to pilfer others’ ideas. In other words, a lack of knowledge of the skills of referencing does not automatically make the learner-academic writer a criminal. The technique of referencing needs to be learnt, understood and practised before it is mastered.

I regard referencing as being essential to the development or ‘hearing’ of voice, as an aid towards agency, essential to the ability to construct an argument. Through the process of referencing, one can align with or distance oneself from other authors, and thereby distinguish one’s own point of view; thus one applies identity to oneself, in relation to others. However, understanding and adopting conventions of referencing often proves a complex and intimidating

affair for students. Initially, certainly, this specificity of referencing to the academic institution serves to promote a sense of non-belonging. The requirement by the institution and academic establishment of referencing by our students in fact entails many assumptions around their understandings of their learning and of their selves as learners. As Angelil-Carter (2000) points out, referencing is implicit to ‘an understanding of knowledge as constructed, debated and contested’.

Referencing: New methods, new voices

The understanding and knowledge around referencing can be a complex adjustment for the so-called ‘non-traditional’ student. Cadman (2005b:480) notes that for her students, ‘developing a critical approach figured notably as a challenge’ in their experiences at her institution. As described in the last chapter, many of the students in my study related histories of simple regurgitation or passive learning, feeding back what was told to them by teachers or presented in readings, and with no debate or critical thinking. This type of ‘learning’ or ‘thinking’ did not require a distinction of different voices or views, or even the development of the student’s own voice, therefore referencing was not an issue. As described in Chapter 5, almost all of the students in my study have moved from schooling backgrounds, where the ‘voices’ to be incorporated into their writing have been those of the teacher and the textbook, especially in poorly resourced schools. As the teacher and student both know where the (uncontested) information is from, there has been little need for attention to referencing, or to think critically about what is given by the teacher or the textbook; questioning claims from either of these sources would be regarded as disrespectful or deviant. Information from them is accepted as the truth by both students and, in many cases, teachers. However, at university, consideration of different viewpoints is definitely required, and critical thinking and questioning is lauded. Similar to Cadman’s (2005b) findings, the development of a critical approach was a major hurdle for students in my course.

The ‘voice’ narrative

Due to the heightened authority of the single textbook, and the lack of other textual resources or expertise in their schooling experiences, for most of the students, items have been regarded as either facts and truths or untruths and errors. These students move from such ‘binaries’ of school knowledge to diversities of opinion and knowledge at universities, with the need to distinguish

the voices concerned. Within these transitions, I noted in the development of students' intertextual writing, a gradual move, from *established habit*, or the enactment of old ways, for example, from speaking or writing through the voices of others, through *reflection*, to the realization and understanding of new rules; two different stages as realization can still coincide with confusion, and understanding leads to clarity, to *action*, to the manifestation or adoption of rules. In reading through the narratives from the journals, I observed what narrative theorists would describe as de- and reconstructions in senses of selves, in relationships to learning, in writing, and in specific aspects of these. The processes through these are complex, often involving loss of a sense of self, purpose and voice, thereby weighing down the feeling of alienation and not belonging.

What follows is an attempt to trace the path of these students' transitions with regard to referencing, through deconstruction of '*old*' voices and the wisdoms, conventions and traditions brought with them, renegotiation of '*odd*' voices (as in strange and confusing), the views encountered and the struggles or challenges that ensue, and reconstruction of '*new*' voices, their emerging selves in their writing. This is presented alongside a series of illustrative extracts from students' journals.

The language issue is a predictable problem and in their journals, many students claimed the problem of referencing as being a language issue, mentioning problems such as not having a big enough vocabulary and difficulty with putting ideas into their own words:

[Students] tend to think that they might 'miss the boat' when using their own words to get a point across. This is probably the case when you are not writing in your 'mother tongue'.

(Xolane:3)

There were difficulties paraphrasing the words of others, as they find the readings difficult to understand:

If we do not understand the readings we are left with no option but to reproduce them when making our own notes.

(Ravi:4)

However, there was also mention of struggles with referencing due to a lack of acquaintance or training and/or practise at school. On arrival at the university, students were likely to have knowledge *about* but not necessarily *of* the academic institution's requirements for referencing. This stimulated fear:

Related to writing is the issue of plagiarism. This caused a major fear to me when I arrived at this institution, as I did not understand the whole issue. I did not know how to reference paraphrased information. (Vuyo:RE)

Some thought that a reference list sufficed in their written assignments, and that if they put other peoples' ideas into their own words, there was no need to acknowledge the authors.

I only knew that you had to include it in your bibliography. I never realized that you could do this: 'Piaget mentions or Vygotsky's view'. (Carma:5)

On entering, few had an understanding of the purpose of referencing, let alone the means by which to do it. Grasping an understanding of when and how to reference proved to be a tumultuous and mysterious path.

Students may fail to reference because they have not read the institution. (Zukisani:7)

A few mentioned that lecturers were wrong in assuming they were acquainted with the practice. It had not been needed in writing done in their professional lives and it was likely that writing assignments at school had not included those types that required referencing, or the distinction amongst other author(s) whose ideas were being espoused.

We were not engaged in writing assignments so that we can practise referencing at high school level. We were doing comprehension test and writing letters only and... answer question from the text. (Funeka:RE)

Most came from schools where the availability of different sources was scarce; libraries, if they existed, contained one or two books on the same topic, and which were thus taken to be singular truths or ultimate facts.

There was just a mini-library for a little bit of children's literature. It was not a library in the true sense of a library. I think there was no need to indicate where you obtained the information from. It was obviously from the prescribed book. (Noluntu:8)

Usually, textbooks at school are single voiced, with the authors of the textbooks presenting 'knowledge' rather than a diversity of views or encouragement for dialogue over what is presented. Together with the learning and assessment habits endorsed at school, this almost invited plagiarism.

My academic writing is not so good because of the way I was taught on how to write assignment and essays, starting from high school where you will read an essay from the text book and during exams you will write it as it is from word to word. (Funeka:3)

Like many of her classmates, Funeka's educational history involved unquestioning passing over of 'truths' from the books provided; this was the accepted practice of displaying knowledge for

approval. Many students wrote of how they were encouraged to copy information and memorise facts for later reproduction in tests or assignments.

Students are just told to read textbooks and then list reasons for a particular event. The students would read memorise and reproduce the same text in the tests or examinations. The teacher would award marks to students for memorizing the facts. (Zimasa:RE)

This sort of attitude towards learning, and the content of the read texts, does not bode well for success in higher education. In other words, the old 'good student' identity is not a 'good' student at the university, thus evoking a jolt to confidence and a loss of identity. The good learner here, rather than repeating the words of experts, is expected to sound like these experts in their writings, without their voices. As a result, there is a sense of untouchability (they are not allowed to use the voices of others), and unreachability (they are not able to reach expression), contributing to a dislocated sense of identity.

My journal partner commented on what I regarded as critical thinking. He said I acted as an author myself. I really can't understand because I thought my opinion was clear and it was indicating my understanding of the text. (Noluntu:8)

At times paraphrasing can lead to confusion as students might think they have used their own idea while in actual fact someone else's might have been there, stuck naked, and unreferenced. (Siya:5)

The deconstruction process of the transition involved confusion and mystery. One student wrote that she felt utterly confused because she had been required to rewrite an essay for one course after her lecturer had indicated that she had plagiarised and she had not meant to. Another had wanted to prove that he had read the prescribed books and so quoted extracts from them but had done so incorrectly.

Neo saw the referencing convention as a gatekeeping device:

Now the only problem about referencing is that those who are clever are now using it as a weapon to oppress others. The way it is done, the school of referencing itself is the one which demands a lot from these young writers. The sequence and the amount of information put down for referencing is too demanding from the poor young writer. (Neo:3)

Often, there was little help seen to be gained in this from the university; students spoke of lack of feedback about the referencing problems lecturers took marks away for, of differing requirements across courses, different instructions from different lecturers and of a lack of information in course handbooks about referencing. Generally, entries in handbooks consist of one page of instructions or examples and a warning about the consequences of plagiarism.

Because the other lecturers do not point out my weaknesses and errors, I have no way of knowing what they require of me. In fact I have been thinking that I have mastered referencing. But it appears I still have to refine my referencing skills. It would really help if lecturers would enforce standard of referencing the university upholds. I mean I have written essays before but there have never been comments on my erroneous referencing. (Qagamba:11)

The fear of plagiarism is often built by the students themselves. However, it is fed by the fact that they are informed in handbooks, and by some staff and other students, that they can be penalised and sometimes barred from gaining a course credit if they are caught cheating or plagiarising, and by the knowledge that there is a 'plagiarism court' at the university. Often, because they do not know how to reference properly, students are afraid that they may inadvertently 'commit the offence' and they live in fear of this.

Getting practised does not mean a direct path to the action of interacting with other peoples' ideas. In other words, their own inability to juggle a variety of discourse styles affects the ways they take on referencing. For example, although one student had almost perfect referencing techniques, in her academic assignments she tended to summarise readings rather than write as if they were interacting with each other. These were detailed point-form summaries, with little in the way of comment from herself on the views related, thus giving a 'linear' presentation of views.

Following the deconstruction phase, students' understanding of what to do in referencing, when the technique is acquired, is often still constrained. For example, it is still seen as a means of identifying intruders: where they are regarded as not being academic when they do not reference properly, or as a means of the reader-judge checking on students and uncovering their deceptions, and correcting them. As a result, any sense of self is rendered constrained or shackled. This seems an infertile environment for the birth of agency.

Academic writing demands acknowledgement so as to help, for instance, a lecturer to judge the student's level of understanding and your fluency in the use of language. Unreferenced work could deceive the audience for which one writes. (Qagamba:7)

In my course, I spent time unpacking the practice of referencing with students. Their reflections yielded some acceptance, but there is still an 'oddness' or confusion, during this renegotiation:

Referencing helps the reader to locate the sources of the writer to know more about the material dealt with in the citation. It also acknowledges the first person who came up with the idea. Again it helps the marker to determine how much the writer has contributed. (Gugu:3)

When you reference your work the reader is made aware that you have looked up a number of viewpoints to support your argument. It is also helpful for the reader to look up the reference if there is anything of interest. Also, if you have used the work of others in the wrong context the reader is able to point this out. This also counters the problem of plagiarism. (Gadija:11)

Although the aspect of different viewpoints was mentioned here, there is no sense of it enabling debate or contestation and construction. There was also still little evidence of understanding the process of bringing the self into writing through use of referencing, or of referencing being a means of adopting an identity as an author, as one of the voices articulated in the writing. This attitude, or lack of identity in writing, ensures a distancing of self in writing.

Students have to specifically know that in essay writing they must subsequently indicate their source of ideas or information used in their essay. It is important to show that you used someone's else's ideas to help you construct the knowledge, because masking up someone's else ideas is regarded as plagiarism which is punishable by law or can lead to loss of marks in an essay. Plagiarism is strictly prohibited in all subject areas. Students must always acknowledge their source. (Siya:RE1)

I did not bother about concepts like referencing... I remember quite well that when I was ready to submit my essay I met one Motswana student, ...and he had a reference paper. I just asked him to print it for me and I attached it to my essay. I did not even worry about the sources he used.

(Ravi:RE1)

Initially, there was almost blind acceptance on the part of these students that one must just do it, and no thought of why, other than that it was said to be wrong not to 'do' referencing. I think that this reflects an absence of a full sense of belonging; in that it was not that there was a purpose to referencing, but that the motivation was to avoid punishment for not doing it. However, emerging from the chaos of the disorganisation and mixing of voices, there became, at some stage, a reconstruction of self and positioning, and an understanding of the assets of referencing, heralding in students' own voices. In other words, what emerged was a reconstruction of students' relationships with their readings within their writing; a separating out and distinction of the different views or 'voices', including their own. Carma reflected:

Referencing could be of use in your assignments when you lose your thoughts, you can go back and focus again. ...Referencing is not your own voice or genre. (Carma:7)

This then raised some anxieties for her about her own voice. Having reflected on the readings around referencing, she wrote that her perception had changed; however it raised some challenges for her as to how individual and unique her voice needed to be. She acknowledged referencing as an asset, as it requires the writer to acknowledge words and ideas that are not hers,

and it encourages writers to think and have their voices heard in their writing. In other words, referencing adds authority to what you write.

Thus, agency emerges, but it begins with other voices; these voices enable agency, or a sense of self, through being able to align oneself with parts of ideas of others and to then construct or develop further meaning from these.

My writing style has changed, I understand now that I must give the reader a clear picture about my writings (e.g. Author, year: page). The reader must be able to see my arguments and the points I have extracted from the readings. I have moved from the known to the unknown. (Noluntu:RE)

Referencing is useful because it sets the writer free in using other people's ideas. After using other authors' ideas the writer will acknowledge them, for sharing the resources with them. The writer also will realise that knowledge is constructed. (Ravi:4)

It is very important because when I write an article, I can refer to different articles or authors. This authors or articles can help me clarify my point clearly and accurately. (Zimasa:4)

So, it is only in this reconstruction phase that an agentic authorial identity became 'visible'; the author comes to direct the reader, weaving together and making use of bits of other voices for their (visible) purpose, in agreeing, elaborating or refuting.

Renegotiating 'voice'

In order to encourage the notion of referencing as a gate-opener to academe, rather than it serving as academe's gatekeeper, as a liberator of voice and agency, rather than a shackler, the *use* of referencing needs to be more obvious as a tool to the crafting of voice rather than as a fiddly and alienating rule to be adhered to.

Voice, whether as an individual, or a participant in the discussion, and agency (performing the voice) in writing need more practise, especially at the beginning of the academic year. Writing in academic courses provides for an internship in which the *usage* of other voices needs to be promoted alongside a conscious development of students' own voices (cf. Lensmire's 'project' of voice, 1998).

Writing as a social activity, rather than an object of assessment, needs to be emphasized more at our institutions. For the discursive sharing to be felt, it needs more readers, a real concept of an audience to engage with, rather than a single 'marker/expert'. In other words, allowing more

writing (and relating to others) in relating to or about (deconstruction and renegotiation) read ideas would help in the promotion of agency in learning. This learning being an *active engagement* with ideas one comes across rather than a passive adoption of these ideas.

If students in their writing worked or ‘played’ more with ideas from readings, and their own, alongside each other in order to relate more to each other in writing, they may take in the use of referencing more willingly and ably, as being a mechanism for sorting or labeling the related ideas. Referencing can then be seen as a system whereby writers are able to relate the different ideas they have read about and are able to distinguish their own thoughts about these ideas as well as the ideas from each other, for others (their readers) to understand and appreciate. It then forms a process of knowledge construction, and, in this process, a development of a sense of self as author.

My final chapter of analysis takes the development of agency in writing further – towards the development of ‘self as author’ (Clark & Ivanič, 1997; Ivanič, 1998; Ivanič & Weldon, 1999), or towards what I have referred to in my research question as an authorial identity.

Chapter 7

Towards an authorial self: Development of dialogue, reflective functioning, agency and voice

Having used Ivanič's three aspects to a writer's identity as a thread across my three analytical chapters, in this chapter I focus on issues affecting the notion of 'self as author' (Ivanič & Weldon, 1999; Ivanič, 1998; Clark & Ivanič, 1997). That is, I examine what affects the establishment of an authorial presence – where the writer's 'voice' becomes discernible, and the writer's agency is visible. This investigation is done in terms of what students have written in their journals – *about* their writing and learning. While I sometimes refer to students' formal academic writing, this does not constitute the primary evidence for the examination of sense of self, reflective functioning, agency, or voice in students' writing. In other words, this is an analytical discussion of students' experiences in literacy practices, as related in their journals, and of their development of dialogue, reflective functioning, agency and voice in what they have written and how they have done so.

Joining the institutional community of academe (in the Arts and Social Sciences disciplines) requires participation in academic debate, and essential to this participation therefore, is a voice. Much of this participation in fact, occurs in the form of writing, and the 'sounding out' of the participant's 'voice' somehow needs to be transferred into the writing. However, from my own observations, what is common amongst students in moving from their social and professional worlds to the academic one, is a loss of 'voice'; this occurs when these students have to move from 'voicing' orally to doing it on paper. Often too, in this process, there is a loss of previously understood meanings and 'knowledge'; for most of these students, their previous educational experiences consisted of binaries – ideas were either 'right' or 'wrong', 'correct' or 'incorrect'; it was one view or another. The transition to the higher educational institution introduces a range of diversities, which go beyond the simple binaries that they have been used to. Another example of a loss in the transition is that of students identified as a 'good learner' when they were able to repeat words of experts. However this identity is lost because at the university, a 'good learner' is expected to sound like these experts – without their voices. Ecclestone talks of transitions being 'problematic if a viable identity in one context does not transfer to another' (2007:122).

For this chapter I have drawn on extracts in students' journals relating to the contrast, and accompanying challenges, between knowledge consumption (which is what most schools are about) and knowledge production (which is what universities are about), and then on to students' sense of self and identity in their learning and writing. I then examine the development of dialogue, reflective functioning, agency, and voice evident from students' journals.

With a perception of learning as consumption of knowledge, the action expected of the learner is that of accepting information in order to repeat it back for assessment or grading. There is no real requirement to understand the information in the process of its consumption or repetition, so it is essentially a 'senseless' exercise – no agency (conscious control) is involved. In addition, no 'voice' of the learner's (reflection or positioning) is invited other than that necessary for the spoken repetition. The learner is an object of this exercise rather than a subject in their learning. Regarding learning as an exercise of knowledge production or construction calls for identity, agency and voice to be aspects or practices within the exercise. An authorial voice can only be manifested through the writer's conscious agency. If agency is not taken, a voice cannot be sounded. So in order for learners to find their voices, they may need to change their learnt, adopted, or constructed perception of learning – from something they get or receive to something they do or make. For agency to be successfully adopted (and for voice to be discerned or 'heard') in learning and writing, the learner needs a sense of their self as do-er of the learning or in the writing – as constructor of meaning. In addition, they need a sense of their self as writer to be heard by their reader. This 'taking of agency' process thus involves the practice of reflective functioning. Dialogue in writing can help to promote reflective functioning; engaged dialogue requires cognitive action – between what has been said or written and how further ideas can be communicated or formed in the writing; in other words, conscious adoption of agency. This dialogue requires a sense of self as learner or co-producer of knowledge and a sense of the other – also as a co-producer. In this chapter I discuss some of what students have written in the course of reflecting on their literacy practices with respect to their changing views of knowledges and their senses of self as learners and writers. I then look at the development of dialogue in their journal writing and at evidence of emerging agency in their reflections on their practices. I make references to agency evident in their formal writing.

Identity, agency and voice in learning and writing

In Chapter 2, I explained Northedge's (2003) point that students gain knowledge from participation in the discourse community. In order to participate, they need to be understood and develop a voice within the community – which requires a sense of their own identity within the particular discourse community.

As I related in Chapter 4, the premise of narrative theory is that the stories we tell ourselves determine our experiences. Similarly, a sense of self and identity affects how agency is shaped and experienced. The argument of this chapter is that agency becomes evident in the actions (and writing) of people whose sense of self and identity reflect increasing self-esteem. They have more control, and experience less uncertainty over the voices they come across and more confidence in expressing their own opinion and leading the reader through the intertwined voices from their readings in their writing. A passive learner takes no control over the voices or content of what they come across; in other words, they lack agency.

Agency often became visible in critical moments – either in students' behaviour in class, in their dealings with their readings, or in their writing – in their journals or formal assignments. Such critical moments may be points where students show understanding or respond to ideas (as opposed to summarising readings), where there is some show of intellectual grappling around the understood texts, where they develop ideas further, or interrogate texts, ideas, or others, and where they relate ideas they come across to lived experiences or practices of their own: the extent to which they show awareness of their own thought processes, or shifts in thinking ('aha moments'), or shifts in their senses of selves, their ability to self-critique.

In the academic essay, the writer or 'narrator' needs to be brought into the 'narrative' (in terms of the development of ideas) in a specific and disciplined way – thus, taking on agency. Agency in essay writing is implicated in structure because links are made by the writer, and ideas are explicitly connected, so the writer is active in the act of writing. For example, there is cohesion (flow) and coherence (clarity), and the introduction and conclusion link to each other and to the body of the essay and the task. Agency in writing is visible in the writer's active reflections and engagements with their topic and the various views they write about – in other words, the 'voice'

of the writer – and the structure of their argumentation. Cooper (1995) claims this process to be what is done towards the construction of a subject position. Northedge (2003) claims one's sense of identity within the discourse community determines one's voice. The perceived allowances of one's sense of self within a specific context determine the potential capacity for one's agency and for one's voice to be expressed.

Emergent agency in students' journal writing could be identified partly through ongoing academic voice, and partly through meta-language, statements that reflect on or express the writer's views on the writing process – a meta-commentary. So I consider the extent or visibility of the writing activity as a kind of dialogue, evidence of a process of developing critical thinking, or engagement with the content of what they are learning or reading, and attempts to develop further ideas out of this content. I also consider the development of these through drafts of their academic essays (often included as journal entries), and the development of an authorial presence, which again, implies a relationship with the reader or consideration of the reader. These two seem to be what Wortham (2000) refers to as the representational and the interactional functions of discourse, in other words, seeing the self being constructed through the interrelationship of represented content and enacted positioning.

I would like to note that generally, the 'voice' in journals is more personal, almost confessing – whilst 'voice' in successful academic writing is bold, opinion-full and structured (with evidence, fact and surety). Whilst there was a bringing out of voice in the journals, it was not in quite the way I expected; it appeared that they, as individuals with their own professional identities, actually became more 'invisible' in voice as they became more institutionalized. I think this is part of the coming to grips with the new practices – almost a changing of clothes – shedding old senses of selves (and allowances and voice) and understood practices, and donning of new, or becoming senses of selves – with new perceived allowances (and voice) and practices coming to be understood and the creating of a new identity. I would imagine they will get voice again, in the course of developing a new 'academic' identity, as they progress through the institution and become full members of its discourse community.

Often these students had brought with them in their literacy practices an idea of the successful academic essay as the authority (rather than the self as authority) and one in which received

wisdom is repeated. In Chapter 2, I related Bowden's (1995) statements about there being no sense of self in this writing (typical of 'old style' academic texts); it is voiceless and the self is kept distant. As Bowden (1995) explains, use of the first person in this kind of essay is not allowed (or perceived to be so). So trying to bring in voice in academia is essentially bringing in a new concept, or voice, into an old style (academic writing) or medium (Bowden, 1995).

Views of knowledge: consumption –versus– production

Chapter 5 described background environments of the students in this study – what students brought with their senses of self. An additional important element of the selves that students arrive with is their understanding of what learning involves or entails – the *act* of learning – and how knowledge is attained – the function (and purpose) of knowledge in their learning. In Chapter 2, I mentioned and compared the reproductive and transformative views of learning. Depending on their view of learning, the learner will have certain ideas about their role and expected behaviour as a learner and a writer within the learning institution. Their previous literacy practices within their particular socially constructed views of learning will already have affected the level of agency that is taken on in their practices of learning and writing. The reproductive view of learning requires little agency other than the act of reproducing information. As I have explained in Chapters 1 and 5, knowledge content is simply transmitted to the learner from the teacher. No other responsibility or engagement within the learning process is expected. This institution embraces the transformative view of learning. Such a view of learning requires responsibility on the part of the learner to engage, explore and think critically within their learning. In this section I examine the challenges brought about for these students in their dealings with differing understandings of learning.

Taking into account Emirbayer and Mische's (1998) chordal triad of agency, I would first like to consider influences from students' pasts in terms of their views and attitudes towards knowledge, for example, whether knowledge is regarded as something one gets or has, or as something one does or works with. In other words, is it seen as something that is simply taken in by the learner at the institution (from lecturers and texts) – implying a fairly passive role and minimal agency on the part of the learner – or is it seen as something made or put together by the learner at the institution (using tools such as texts, discussions and teachers) – implying a more active role and

agency on the part of the learner? Each of these views have implications for how learning is regarded and what its purpose is seen to be: to return or repeat the knowledge given, where the goal is memory rather than mental processing – so meaning is not really essential, or to build on knowledge out there, where the goal is understanding, so meaning is important. The perceived purposes of ‘learning’, and of reading and writing, for example, to fulfil part of the requirements for the course to get a degree, or to explore ideas or to dialogue with interested readers, would affect the way in which agency is employed, or not.

Boughey and Niven argue that ‘academic practices emerge from values and understandings related to the production of knowledge associated with the disciplines themselves’ and thus, reading, writing and knowing in these academic disciplines require more than schools can teach. They explain that ‘schools are consumers of knowledge rather than producers’ (2012:40). So, as was related in Chapters 1 and 5, students have moved from school, where they were taught to *consume* knowledge, to university, where they are expected to *produce* knowledge. Knowledge production requires a more active agency, a sharing and a ‘bringing in’ of the self (an authorial self); consumption has a passivity to it, almost an indifference; the learner is an ‘empty vessel’. As I related in Chapter 5, most of the students in my course were educationally raised in traditional teacher-centered classrooms and for them it took some getting used to not simply having knowledge *fed* into them, but being expected to actually take an active part in their own learning process. The ‘authority’ was what the teacher or the textbook gave. Ideas within this ‘knowledge’ were understood as static, rather than constantly evolving through the learner’s engagement with them. These students’ positive social experiences in their learning environments involved feeling and being confident when they were able to repeat the ideas of others and not when they questioned or ventured into critical thinking. Many of the students in my study related that they were not trained to use true agency in their learning; they were encouraged to memorise and regurgitate and not to question. In addition, their teachers themselves did not model, or encourage, much in terms of agency in knowledge seeking or meaning making. The agency, in terms of finding out, exploring, and being curious, often came from places other than school, for example, in play, and was not equated with ‘learning’. The actions that learners performed in their classrooms were done by them to satisfy their teachers’ requirements of them, rather than to promote or develop their own learning. As is evident from

Chapter 5, little reading was done or encouraged at schools and not much exploration of ideas. Students were also not practised at relating to their own experiences or situations. It is difficult to imagine, therefore, how agency or any conception of their own ‘voice’ is possible when learners are taught to depend on being ‘given’ knowledge (to give back); deferring to and repeating the ‘voices’ of others rather than carving out their own unique ‘voice’.

The consumptive perspective is reflected in students whose essays simply consisted of summaries of readings or reproduced ideas and no commentaries on, or interrogations of, these from themselves. Similarly, when they ‘talk’ about readings in their journal entries, there is a tendency, despite my questions as journal prompts, to summarise the readings, or to accept all views they have read about at once, despite nuanced differences in them.

Especially at the beginning of the course, a common feature was giving back content from the readings and lectures in their writing, with little indication of thought around them. There was also a fair amount of talk around *getting* knowledge from lecturers and readings and being here in order to *get* a degree rather than to learn. There was often a passivity in terms of effort from the learner’s self in their learning. This was especially noticeable in South African students – of all races – and was possibly a hangover or after effect of the propagated actions of apartheid education and rule at all levels. In other words, this passivity could be attributed to particular educational systems and to their means of teaching and assessment, and what is valued and rewarded.

As most of the students had not been studying for some time, they felt somewhat awed by the prospect. For many of them, the expectations and styles of teaching had changed since their own experiences as learners. Rather than sit quietly, they were expected to engage in class, to discuss with their peers and the lecturer, and to question the knowledge put before them. This did not make them comfortable in the new environment. For many of them the uses of reading and writing required in their learning at the university was a rude awakening from the learning, reading and writing habits that they had been taught at school or college, let alone those they had practised since leaving school. Ravi mentioned being socialised into ‘selfish possession of

knowledge' rather than co-operative use of it (which was discouraged). What follows is an analysis of what students said with regards to their views of knowledge and literacy practices.

A fairly typical experience is one that is outlined as follows:

I'm a victim of not having been taught reading and writing as a means to get to use language in order to be able to construct, analyse and interpret the texts that I've been exposed to. That is I feel that I never did any meaningful learning through reading and writing. The only writing form that I did in my academic career was just write comprehension without comprehending and answer questions in exercise (content areas) or writing essays or compositions. My teachers and even lecturers I had never emphasized the importance of meaningful writing i.e. writing with a purpose in a particular genre and having an audience in mind. The only purpose we wrote for was to get a good grading by minimizing grammatical errors. The only audience that I thought of when I was doing my writing was the teacher. We were never given the opportunity to reflect on an idea meaningfully or critically. The writing process was never given the necessary attention. Drafts were never encouraged and the only editing that I did was termed 'corrections', where we had to correct grammatical errors, sentence construction and nothing was said in the teachers' comments about the format (coherence of facts) of what we wrote. (Ayanda:2)

Ayanda related that agency was not recognised or taught. Reading and writing were not seen or learn as agentic activities. Opportunities for reflective functioning were not granted. Writing was not seen as a process of making understanding or as part of the learning process. Corrections were done to make the writing 'right', as opposed to communicating a message – to fit in with socially constructed rules, as opposed to ensuring meaning was transmitted.

Ayanda also related how his history teacher in Grade 9¹ gave them a set of dates and events that they had to memorise and that they as learners never knew the significance of the dates and events or how they were meaningful to themselves. He commented that he thinks they had to rely on memorisation because his teachers themselves had little knowledge of the subjects they were teaching. Most of his teachers only had a Matric² and no further training.

Given that knowledge construction involve negotiation of meaning, systematic organisation of new knowledge and the subsequent replacement of old information with new information, we thus could not construct knowledge meaningfully because we just added to our memory registers the new information through memorisation. It was thus difficult to recall information or replace information because even the old information was not meaningfully understood i.e. we could not form any meaningful connection between the old concepts and the new information or experience. (Ayanda:6)

¹ The second year of high school.

² The qualification on completing the final year of high school.

This is a sad commentary on the effects of expectations, on the part of teachers and learners, of passivity or lack of learner agency. He later explained that they were simply required ‘to affirm the authors ideas’ and ‘internalise’ the texts through drills and memorisation, rather than reinvent, recreate or rewrite them, and that this made them ‘submissive to the text as written’ and rendered them passive in the process. He also mentioned that they were never prompted to consider the social and historical contexts of the authors whose work they read or of the texts themselves and that their being in a language that ‘had no bearing on our primary discourse’. The texts did not ‘validate our cultural capital’. In other words, they were not encouraged to draw meaning from or within the readings that they did, nor to interrogate the texts they read. It is, however, interesting that, despite the learning habits he was taught, in relating them, there is a sense of ownership – he is talking of his own experience, and can therefore own it and relate it to what he has read.

As I have mentioned, questioning was not always encouraged as a learning practice. It was often looked down upon and equated with ignorance and disrespect or insolence, rather than a quest for meaning making. Questioning of written texts, or critical thinking around them, or even of knowledge given by teachers was equated with disrespect for the authorities. Thus, for successful potential academics, previous socially constructed perceptions of allowance of questioning as a learner, and as part of the practice of learning, needed to be deconstructed and then reconstructed.

Lutho wrote that he did not feel he fitted well in the academic culture as he lacked the confidence to take part in class discussions, fearing that his comment would be ‘stupid and unacademic’. He simply listened to what his classmates said. He also put this down to his own schooling background, where, if they gave the wrong answer, they were beaten or punished and made to look stupid in front of their classmates. He felt this also disadvantaged them in terms of spoken English.

Attempts to take agency or construct own meaning were often thwarted by their teachers; for example, Carma related that her Afrikaans teacher would not allow her to interpret a poem in a different way from that in the explanation given by him. Zimasa’s early lessons were that power

and agency resided in the teacher and not the learner, whereas at the university, the learner was expected to hold the reins of their learning.

I am also used to the old style of reading and answering questions. Lecturer to emphasize on other issues and then move on to other readings, as opposed to what we do in [university] where we read a lot and engage in lot of activities. (Zimasa:11)

Some spoke of critical thinking as a cultural practice, even seeing it as a colonial import:

I was not exposed to ways of looking at an issue from different angles to an extent that I could not manage to come up with my own theory or ideas from a particular issue at hand. ...Perhaps there are cultural factors involved given that our culture does not encourage questioning of certain issues as this is viewed as being disrespectful. This therefore backs up the notion, which holds the view that critical thinking is an imported phenomenon from developed nations. (Xolane:RE)

Reading and writing had been regarded as chores rather than tools for learning. Thato was not encouraged to construct understandings:

What did we understand was not the issue, but if we could recite the information to the teacher without a mistake, e'hhee! Learning has taken place; proceed to the next piece of information. We used a lot of rote learning and memorising or cramming all the stuff about the Vasco-Da-Gamas and the like. But there was never 'WHY that?' (Thato:6)

There was not often a sense that reading was for pleasure or a stimulant to thought. In Chapter 5, I mention Ravi's previous literacy practices in her social and educational environment. Her parents were illiterate and neither they nor her school prioritised reading as an activity, other than her teachers giving her texts to memorise for tests. With Ravi, the teacher held the power; the learner was propagated – controlled as a passive recipient. Reading was a chore and not an indulgence or pleasurable experience (with a more fulfilling purpose). Her teachers did not encourage them to read out of school. She attributed her reading problems at university to her social background. She said that when reading at university, she got discouraged easily and tended to read just for the assignment rather than for enjoyment and that she had 'never been given the opportunity for the love of reading' (Ravi:5), and wishes she had. She continued to explain that she struggled a great deal with the amount and density of the readings required at the university, taking ages to make sense of them or find relevance to her learning or interests. At an early stage in the course, she set up a successful reading group which grappled with the readings together. She actually became an avid reader through the course.

The content of the readings required at university were often simply taken as the truth; as facts to absorb rather than ideas to play with – 'learning' therefore becomes a chore – done passively and

not an exercise involving active relating of self to others. For example, towards the end of his draft for an essay, Yanga proposed questions he ‘felt’ were important to investigate – all of which were taken from one of his readings. His readings became ‘his views’. As evidenced in Chapter 6, views of what knowledge is also affected issues such as referencing. Ravi had believed that if she simply put other people’s ideas into her own words, she had no need to acknowledge them.

As indicated in Chapter 5, Viwe explained that before coming here, her reading was entirely centered around the content of the subject that she taught at her school. She said she simply mastered the content of her subject and then stopped reading, because everything was in her notes. Other than official correspondence, she read nothing more. Now at the university, her lack of practise in reading dented her self-esteem.

Lack of reading or lack of getting myself to the habit of reading caught up with me. It was hard for me to identify with critical reading, which warranted critical thinking and academic writing. It was a struggle for me to concentrate, comprehend and to get started on assignments. (Viwe:7)

I also indicated in Chapters 5 and 6 that understanding of purpose of learning is often itself determined in early practices: whether it was to repeat texts of others without questioning or understanding, or to grapple to understand the content of these texts.

Ours was a practise-based course, however, and this means of learning was new to a lot of the students. Zukisani suggested that the course be given more time in the week as they needed time to jot down everything we said. He continued,

I think you are here to make us understand the expected standard of this university and you should make us pass. One more request is that let us be given a good summary of each reading because most this reading are very difficult to understand even after reading it 5 times. Remember we are to be educated for life as the mission statement promises. (Zukisani:12)

Some students tended to hand over their agency to us; we were responsible for getting them to pass. It was as if they believed they had paid (their fees) as customers to get a product. Zukisani also appeared to expect us to correct essays and edit his drafts. He did not seem to understand that in class and in our written feedback on his writing, we were encouraging engagement rather than instructing.

Ritsie tended towards voiceless writing in both her journal and assignment writing, basically regurgitating ideas that she came across, with little indication that she had absorbed any meaning. For much of the time she showed little evidence of taking on agency in her assignment writing or in the performance of it, other than following instructions. She did complain in a journal entry that she saw no point in doing a draft as, despite doing everything she was told to do (in the feedback from us) – and conceding that it was not very good, her marks did not go up.

To my understanding what is the use of doing a draft? What is the use of re-write? I did all what she said I must do. Yes I understand that it was not that much good but not to obtain that percentage again after a draft. (Ritsie:14)

Ritsie's attitude was that she should be rewarded for 'doing corrections'; she did not seem to have a conception of the need for reflective functioning.

It seems that with agency not being allowed at school level, it is understandable that learning would be seen as something done to satisfy others rather than the self. Learners carried out instructions as dictated to them, whether or not the strategies worked for them. Una related how she drew up 'evidence of her planning' to show her teacher *after* she had written her composition; her teacher's strategy (of preplanning her essay) did not work for her, but she did it to satisfy the teacher. Even note-taking was seen as an exercise done for someone else: It emerged that Mpho had no idea that note taking during her reading or learning needed to be meaningful to her (in words or language she felt comfortable with) in order to be useful. In reflecting on his first assignment, Vuyo saw his problem in his writing as having lacked the skills to reference. However, it was more complex than this. Believing that his aim was simply to prove that he had read the prescribed books, he quoted extensively – albeit without referencing properly. However, a bigger problem with his writing was that his own voice or his own thoughts had not been visible on the texts he quoted; he neglected to comment on the quotes or to link them to each other.

Students did discover enjoyment and satisfaction in their own agency. Seeing the learner (and self) as a being with the capacity for agency was a new idea for Athi:

Now having examined this concept of whole language approach, I came to realise that learners and educators are capable of controlling or monitoring their own educational lives. They are active

problem formulating and problem solving social beings who interact in a particular social surroundings. Learning is done for a purpose and should have essential meaning for learners.

(Athi:9)

At one stage, Mpho, a mathematics teacher, wrote that she had always been a lazy writer. She had come to realise that this meant that she depended on other peoples' knowledge and did not give herself the opportunity to explore her own. Thinking of reading, writing and studying going together was a new idea to her, and during the course she began to practise the three together and realised that this enabled her to relate new ideas to her own knowledge.

I realised that if I write then I will be in a position to see whether I understand or not and if not I will be in a position to ask for direct help and not beat about the bush. You know for the many years that I have been a teacher, I just associated writing with those teaching languages and social science so much that when I had given my learners some exercises I'll just make short general comments. I have learnt a lot about writing and its importance.

(Mpho:2)

After reading the article by Freire, she wrote that she had learnt a lot and, as a result, decided that she should commit herself to the practise of reading for understanding (rather than memorisation which was what she had learnt to do), so that she could develop her critical thinking skills. The idea of putting things into her own words, rather than rattling off someone else's (without thinking of what they meant) was new to her and she found that learning was much more fun! The Freire text also had an impact on Sibahle who reflected on it in relation to her own teaching; she immediately started encouraging her own learners to read for understanding rather than 'to read by heart'. She wrote of how her learners seemed to be enjoying the exercise she set of letting them go to the reading corner and read in silence, then narrating what they had read, in their home language.

Much was written about the thrill of new discoveries or learnings from doing the literature review and finding interesting information for it, having chosen topics they were interested in:

When going to the library in the evenings and scanning through all the articles and journals, I have found this to be my best time for simply enjoying the university and the readings. I found that when opened to the possibilities of what is out there, I was given a new sense of purpose. ... This relates to a changing of my role as I see it.

(Marlon:RE4)

Marlon developed an enjoyment in the 'indulgence' of learning. He generally found it easy to relate the content of his lectures to his own classroom context. He seemed to enjoy considering the theory that had been discussed in his lectures in terms of what it meant for his own teaching.

(This did not always immediately manifest in good performance in written assignments – which involved a different exercise – but I believe it yielded an opening for the potential to succeed at academic writing, with reflective functioning, and agency now being involved in his learnings.) Zukisani commented that he had ‘been reading without a strategy’ and felt ‘like a born again person’ having read our article on reading strategies. Brian acknowledged that he was coming to construct meaning from the readings; he was now able to ‘link the dots’.

I have been reading a vast amount of text’s these last 2 days, it’s been quite harrowing. However what I have noticed is that I’m beginning to form an ability to link different pieces of text together, to see them in context and in a relationship to each other. (Brian:3)

Hesta was pleased to learn that it was not compulsory for her as a reader to be ‘submissive to the writer’s viewpoint’. She goes on to explain how the critical thinker can be brought out in readers: ‘to be able to impose your own frame of reference (formulate and motivate your own ideas) on what you have read would mean, you the reader have to adjust to the text to match your own schemata’ (Hesta:5)³. Siya mentioned that he felt that through doing written assignments he could strengthen his skills and enrich his learning experience and that he hoped to take more back to his classroom (as an educator).

Sense of self and identity in journal writing

For this section of my analysis I focus on students’ emerging academic identities and learning or knowledge construction – as expressed in their journal writing. I examine what students have written about how they regard their identities and what implications are evident in their journal writings with respect to their identity as a learner and as a writer, which, as has been described, includes the sense of an emergent ‘voice’.

In Chapter 2, I mentioned that, through a conception of one’s self as a learner, one opens oneself up to learning. I also wrote that (re)creating one’s identity as a learner is not simple. It depends on one’s perception of what constitutes learning and thus what it means to be a learner (for example, a consumer or a producer of knowledge) and how deeply ingrained this is, or how open the student is to relinquish this in the process of creating a new identity as a learner. This then determines one’s understanding of what one has to do in order to learn and what sort of self agency is involved. Especially when an individual has come to new perceptions in these regards,

³ This was after having read one of our course readings on the act of reading for comprehension.

(for example, in the transitioning from school to higher education, or from an old community of practice to a new one, or has migrated from one sense of self to a new one), the agency called for in the new practice has to be discovered or learnt. (In addition, when writing in a language that is not one's mother tongue, in order to achieve the agency required, a further adoption of cultural capital, of the language or institution, is needed.)

For many learners, entry into an institution of higher education is not accompanied by an immediate sense of belonging or feeling at home. As was described in Chapter 5, the new institution can be an alien environment – geographically, socially and culturally. The learner as newcomer may be a stranger to the institutional expectations, requirements, knowledge, practices and people – peers and lecturers. There is, however, more likelihood of there being some familiarity of at least some of the institutional practices and expectations for the young adult moving recently from school, a well-resourced school in particular, than for an older adult as a learner entering with a vague memory of possibly outdated, forgotten or unexercised practices, thus rendering much of the new environment threatening and unwelcoming. In fact, the transition to higher education is often accorded respect as a rite of passage in the development of young people. It is thus directly attended to and prepared for in the last years of schooling and on entering the higher institution, in forms of guidance lessons and orientation practices, and likely to be given support from families and institutions (educational and commercial) themselves. However, from what I have learnt in my teaching experience, attention paid on the part of the institution to the facets of the transition to higher education undertaken by older learners is usually non-existent, and the rites of passage and students neglected.

In addition, I would argue, that often there are assumptions about the romance of learning for older students. The perception of learning as a luxury enjoyed for learning's sake is often overrun by the pressure to learn for the sake of a qualification, a chance in employment, or of promotion. For many students, getting into the institution is prized by family and community (and often the institution of employment) and there is often a status issue – if they are the first in their family or community to get to higher education, they cannot return a failure. Perhaps for these reasons, it is likely that, rather than challenge the assumption of their being outsiders at the institution, such students merely try to adhere to it. This with a sense of 'borrowing' the

institution to get a qualification; their focus is their (appropriation of knowledge for) career path rather than their (appropriation of knowledge for) learning. In fact, academe seems like a fairy-tale world they are entering (almost fraudulently – they want to be there but think they do not really fit). But is this a journey of conformation or induction?

As has been discussed in detail in Chapter 2, identities can be determined by social structures, by others or negotiated by individuals' selves (Norton & Toohey, 1990). Identities are also not static. So considering this in terms of a writer's sense of self, their identity could be determined by aspects such as their perceived allowances, as set up by social structures, their dialogical interactions, feedback and responses to their writing and how they perceive themselves, how they want to be perceived, and how they present themselves in writing. This last is affected by the level of reflective functioning and agency of the writer – the extent to which the writer is an agent of their identity.

The way in which a person sees or identifies themselves, alongside their values and beliefs, correlates with their levels of self-esteem (which may impact on the agency they adopt in an area such as learning and academic writing). An easy example is a sense of belonging or not belonging in the institution, or in the culture of or with the language used at the institution, and therefore, regarding themselves as lesser (and thus lesser abled). Cadman claims that 'the most immediate influence on students' learning is their affective experience of the classroom itself' (2005:355). Some of our students come here with some concept of their educational history having been 'disadvantaged' and if they do not bring this concept with them, when here, there is likely to be some talk of certain types of educational backgrounds as having been 'disadvantaged', perhaps in what their lecturers or other students have said or in their course reading matter. This (constructed) narrative about them can also affect how they feel about themselves. I think that the affective experience of the institution contributes to this low self-esteem, and the feeling of being an outsider affects their learning and how they *negotiate* with the knowledge (such as ideas, readings) they come across. As non-belongers, this knowledge can appear to them as superior and therefore something they simply need to take on, rather than question. What I will try to do here is illustrate from what students have written in their journals, three levels in terms of identity and self-esteem: comments illustrative of low self-esteem,

evidence of conflict between identities, and those with glimmerings of confidence in conceptions of selves as academics. I will then relate these to views of knowledge and evident agency.

In terms of issues affecting low self-esteem, many commented that their reading, writing and identity had an effect on each other: because the skills were lacking, they had a low self-esteem which determined how they felt in terms of how they perceived they were regarded by their lecturers and the institution (as lowly). Language and discourses were strong issues that affected students' senses of self. Ritsie related how confused and insecure she felt in the first weeks; at the end of class discussions she would panic as she felt that she had gained nothing from the discussions; she had not followed them due to her struggles with the English language. Although she believed her English was good, she felt a gap when having to engage with English mother tongue speakers. When they had to discuss their feedback in groups, she 'felt so small' as she was not sure whether they had read the same text and she was too intimidated to ask about things she did not understand or to share what she knew. Yonela said that she had felt comfortable and proud of who she was and of what she did, because she knew she was good at teaching and this was evident in her pupils' results. However, she said she felt threatened when she was around people whom she perceived to be intellectually superior to her. She said that this was even worse when people were 'talking computer language' as she felt left behind; she equated this skill with intelligence. For Viwe, it had been almost two decades since she had done anything academic and her lack of practise in reading and writing, as well as time management, affected her sense of self whilst studying for the course. She said she was afraid to participate in class in case she was wrong and her responses showed up her stupidity. She also claimed that it was not in her culture for her to debate. She did enjoy writing journal entries to a partner, claiming she much preferred this as a means of communicating her ideas.

Students often mentioned that they 'ran out of words' for long essays (meaning that they had no more to say) or that, due to their lack of (academic) vocabulary, they were not able to state their argument clearly. However, I think that although this was seen by students as a language issue, I suspect it was rather an issue of academic genres and their game of discursive engagement. The journals were felt to be easier to write in terms of language, being more casual (which enabled 'more words').

Being an older student was seen by some as something of a disadvantage; for example, Khan felt very vulnerable receiving feedback on his essays, especially as it indicated what others thought of him and that, because he was an older student, he should be able to produce better work than the younger ones. He also posited that adult students were less open to critique than younger students.

As I have related, for many of these students, up till now reading and writing had been relatively meaningless tasks – done for someone else rather than indulged in for the self. So the cognate self has been somewhat inactive in the process. Now, in this higher educational institution, it is called upon to play a role. Furthermore, this self is called upon to be agentic, in someone else's language or in someone else's discourse.

Students have seldom thought of writing as something they engage in for better understanding or to gain knowledge. Furthermore, this knowledge gaining process of writing is not a two dimensional one: of thoughts to paper, or reading to writing. It has to become multidimensional – or multi-relational. The writer fulfils many roles: as one doing the act of writing, relating one's own ideas in writing, relating one's own ideas to the reader(s), relating others' ideas in writing, relating others' ideas to the reader(s), relating to and reflecting on one's own and others' ideas (that is at least six roles or dimensions), and doing this to the reader(s), relating others' ideas to each other, oneself and the reader(s), relating others' ideas to new ideas, new contexts, and more. All of these require learnt and practised skills, and require a sense of self as knowledge seeker/player/manipulator/relator/sharer – essentially a sense of self as learner and, thus, agent. Most of these students also brought with them already established professional identities – entailing (socially constructed) roles, with certain ways of behaving, speaking and relating – some of which may be contradictory to those seen or expected of them as learners and writers.

Both the requirement for writing at the institution, and the presentation of feedback on it, imposed on students' senses of self, especially at the beginning of the year. Writing was experienced as a vulnerable, exposing activity:

What makes it stressful is possibly this notion that because we write and impart our ideas in response to the text we make ourselves vulnerable to the outside world. Thoughts about whether

the reader accepts what we are saying. This rejection of us, our ideas is quite risky. Writing is a deeply personal experience. (Marlon:2)

Here, there is a conception of perceived power in the writing institution, and a risk of rejection as a result of what the student has written.

I have suggested that often the resistance of students to reflect in their writing, or to respond to our journal prompts in a dialogical mode in writing, was possibly because they did not know it, or were not familiar with it, as a practice in learning or writing, so it was another aspect of the institutional discourse that they had to adapt to: a new way of thinking and behaving. I have related that, especially at the beginning of the course, when they ‘talk’ or ‘dialogue’ about readings, there is a tendency, despite my questions as weekly prompts, to summarise the readings. In other words, they were not sure of the allowances or expectations, the different ways of thinking, valuing, behaving, seeing – the Discourse.

Despite the fact that they were students, some mentioned that they had never conceived of themselves as writers before. Writing was seen as an elite practice; Lutho had believed that writing texts was only for upper class people with certain academic qualifications. As he had not associated himself before with academic society, his writing and identity were negatively affected. He also said that he had developed a hatred for reading because the reading he had to do at school was not for pleasure but had to be memorized for examinations. Other reading material had not been available to him. Writing had not been something that was shared with others or regarded as a social communication. Carma wrote that she had only thought of herself as a writer when she had to write down her personal mission statement and goals for the next five years at a recent teachers’ workshop. She did not feel inadequate at this because she was used to it, but otherwise she believed that ‘writers are born’ and had doubts about becoming ‘a serious or academic writer’ herself. Her writing just had to ‘look clean’:

I am more worried about grammatical errors than the content of my writing and I feel very uncomfortable when I have to share my thoughts on paper with my fellow colleagues of students. I never write for an audience. At school I felt so proud if there were no red pen scratches on my work. (Carma:1)

In other words, she was a victim of the perceived importance of correction above meaning, spoken of earlier in this chapter. She also wrote that her previous lack of exposure or

stimulation to express herself through the written word caused her great feelings of insecurity and inadequacy here, and that, as a result, she tended to regard herself as inferior in comparison with her peers.

Funeka wrote of her first assignment as a critical incident in her development. She said it was fraught with difficulties for her, especially as she was very anxious doing it on her own and she had no idea how to construct a logical argument. She explained that at that stage she did not know about drafting an assignment or showing it to someone else like her journal partner or lecturer. She also did not know about referencing. Once written, she gave it to someone else to type (as she was not yet computer literate) and so there were a lot of mistakes. She did not worry to collect it once marked and so did not see the feedback in time to rewrite it or for us to help her with her next assignment. Extracts detailing her development through the course are discussed through this chapter.

In one journal entry, Phumla wrote that her identity as a writer was seriously challenged by the high standards of the institution and her lowly educational background. She too had felt demoralised after receiving her first assignment back. However, although the journey was not without major stress and self-doubt, she wrote that it was an honour to have been accepted at this university as she had never rated herself as one of the highly intelligent people that would be there. Now here, she believed that she would exit as a confident person able to argue out her facts and ideas in public. She seemed to remain conscious of this image as she journalled, repeatedly commenting on the need to bring one's own voice into one's writing and to aim for clarity in her own understanding of what she was writing about, and communicating this to the reader, something she had picked up on in our course. Her constant returning to the course teachings served to keep her focused on what she wanted to become. This would fit as an illustration of the success of the chordal triad of agency (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998).

Various conflicts of identities were highlighted. As these conflicting identities entailed different expectations in terms of behaviours and supposed allowances (which individuals were sometimes acquainted with), it is possible that agency could be inhibited and self-esteem lowered. These were often felt in the realisation of non-acquaintance with expectations of certain

behaviours or communications. Not all students could acknowledge that they had a cultural identity; Ayanda spoke of suffering from an 'identity culture crisis'. He said he lived away from his home and had a distant relationship with his parents, who only really featured when he needed financial support. Whilst his father had told him that they were Xhosa, he said he had not been able to trace any Xhosa relatives. He had grown up in a culturally diverse environment, with Afrikaans, English, Xhosa and Tswana people. He sometimes felt frustrated with not knowing how to act appropriately: 'I'm faced with a problem of being caught on several occasions with the problem of doing something that I've learnt to be acceptable in one culture in another culture' (Ayanda:18). Lungisa had been raised in the Eastern Cape, where they respected their cultural norms. He explained that this meant that some things were done by men only, such as ploughing the fields, and others were done by women only, such as fetching wood or water from the river. However, this structure, or gender distinction was lost in coming to Cape Town because men have to do all the house work as their wives are left at home (in the Eastern Cape).

There were some political haunts, with older South African students having been educated through the apartheid system and having been aware that their education was inferior to others, and their working lives and opportunities having been affected due to their particular race or gender (much of which has been related in Chapters 5 and 6). As I have explained, the idea of their education being inferior often had a negative effect on their sense of self or confidence within the institution. However, while younger South African students acknowledged awareness of 'the badness of apartheid' (Cameron), they did not feel that it had affected them. Botswanan students seldom saw themselves as having been affected negatively by colonialism, although there were bits of awareness (of the effects of colonialism on them) when talking about language in the course. However, their education in terms of content at school was generally foreign (colonial) to their circumstances. For example, they learnt about Western culture and values, rather than their own, in their literature and history lessons. This 'foreignness' could serve to make them feel that they did not fully belong in the world of their education. So it could have a subliminal effect on their confidence and sense of self, especially when they came to an institution which they regarded as being the epitome of Western culture. Khubani, a local student, wrote that, although he felt he fitted in the academic culture because he was literate, he

felt he had lost some of his identity in becoming westernised through the education he had gathered at school.

In my culture as a black writing did not exist, it is something we were introduced to by white people. Even the information or history was not written down. People would rely on elderly ones to get the information of the past. That is one of the factors that made most black people to lose identity as they lacked writing skills which is related to 'power' in the study manual. (Khubani:3)

He seems to perceive of identity as a Western construct with his comment that generally for people in his culture their identity was seen as being absent because they did not write.

By April, Thato had written six essays and four journal entries. Whilst he conceded that he had no problem expressing his voice as a learner in his journal entries, he found it very difficult to write academically and to conceive of identifying himself in this writing.

Surely I have not yet put any authority over my work. I am just writing in fear and to meet the demand maybe. I am realising that there is too much fear in our writing, maybe that assumption of saying this is writing for marks. Maybe it is the degree at which one has to portray his/her inner self to put the argument across I am not yet certain of what I am expected to say. I do not know if I am to put that type of thought or should be polite with the subject. To tell the truth up to now we are not yet our real selves. We still have that unidentifiable misconception about the work we deliver. Currently we are still trying to fit ourselves into this jigsaw puzzle of the academia and into the veins of this institution. (Thato:3)

This entry is certainly indicative of agency in his thoughts and reflections, and I do have a sense of his voice in this writing – there is a cohesive thread through his narrative, but apparently it is not yet evident in his academic writing (he did struggle to keep a focussed thread in his early essays). So I would consider this as 'developing agency' – towards voice being 'visible' in his academic writing. It is interesting in what it says of the constraints experienced – in writing for others' expectations rather than his own fulfilment, in the vulnerability of opening his self up, and in that he felt constrained by perceived allowances – or the lack of a perceived allowance: 'we are not yet our real selves'. He was very expressive in his journal entries – often branching off into story-telling, which I have related in Chapter 6. His ambition was to graduate eventually with a doctorate in Education. At points he felt overwhelmed with the pressure of all the reading and writing he had to do.

This is very embarrassing my sister. How can a man of my age my calibre and of my ability complain about reading and not understanding. The dictionaries are available; the Internet is also available with many other reference materials to support one's understating. All these materials can provide simplified versions of the difficult words. (Thato:LRjnl)

The idea of constructing meaning themselves from texts and taking on an authorial voice was initially greeted with fear. In writing of her identity crisis at the institution, Carma explained that she had experienced difficulties when she had to look for ‘true academic meaning of academic reasonings’ when she read. She questioned whether the university expected her to have an academic status when reflecting on reading and writing essays. In an early entry she wrote that although she did sometimes understand her readings, the challenge was in finding her ‘authoritative voice’ when writing her essays, as the confidence to differ and ‘express her voice’ was just not present whilst she was busy with her essays. This perceived expectation of ‘academic status’ is perceived as unreachable and not as self. (At this stage her journal partner had commented that she had, in fact, become more confident and less insecure and was clearly well on her way to becoming the academic writer she wanted to be.)

There was often a perception that students’ own ideas do not count. Again, this is a matter of perceived allowances from previous structured practices. The question as to how to reference one’s own ideas came up fairly regularly. Students were nervous of expressing them without attributing them to someone else. ‘I am having a question on how do I reference my own ideas. In this course my ideas seem to be the waist [a waste], that’s my feeling’ (Lungisa:3). In other words, to Lungisa, his own ideas were not contained in his perceived allowances at the institution.

Ayanda, a local student who was very politically expressive in many of his entries, wrote early on that he felt he was invading a world of writers which was still being viewed as an elite group. He claimed that the writers of their texts assumed authority and that they as learners had to submit to the views, values and beliefs narrated in the text. He expressed anger on occasion that most of the writers and people assumed to have authority in the texts they are exposed to have a strong Western or European background, and that it is difficult for African students to master or comprehend literature written by people who grew up with different social backgrounds to themselves. His partner concurred, claiming that their ‘cultural, historical and social constructions or views on reality’ were not linked to the texts they were required to interrogate and negotiate meaning from. This student regarded his academic life as one which carried the intent to find ways of liberating himself from the oppressive effects of apartheid. He wondered

why this was not the case with all his fellow citizens; why others were not attempting to achieve improved levels of literacy. He felt there needed to be an increase in African university graduates. Although he aspired towards an academic identity, he was also ambivalent about the 'eliteness'. He claimed that their academic identity was always insecure; they were submissive to the Western world.

We are thus victims of the tyranny of authors who have been in the field of writing. This may also be the reason why students when writing will tend to plagiarise because they feel that the only people whose writings are acknowledged and widely accepted are those who are already within the elite group of writers. In order to produce or write a good piece of text you have to attribute a lot of your writings or supporting arguments to an expert writer who is already acknowledged or reknown in the field of writing. (Ayanda:4)

His expressions in this regard are what Thesen (1997) would refer to as a 'highly conscious ace of identity'.

For most of them, it was the first time they were in a multiracial/multicultural class. Some enjoyed this, such as partners Vuyiswa and Khatu, who agreed that, through the course they had learnt that 'all people are human beings, because in our culture there is a line between black and white'. However, others maintained the divisions.

I noted in Chapter 5, local working students seemed to find it much more difficult to connect with the identity of being a student at the university. Other than attending lectures or popping in to the library, they did not spend casual time on campus. Part-time students did not mix much socially or informally with their classmates, so the boundaries between the institution and their work and home environments remained rigid or non-porous, and in this regard, their sense of self was often seen and felt by them as intruder in the institutional space. In constantly moving between their work, home and lectures, they were not able to *situate* themselves in the academic context, so development in their literacy practices was difficult and isolatory.

As I have indicated, many of these students were in professional leadership positions and many were experienced school educationists. Thus it was an adjustment for them, being in an environment where they held less superior positions than they were used to. There were status issues if they failed or did poorly in assignments, or if there were suggestions from their tutors or lecturers that they could be accused of plagiarism due to their lack of referencing. There were

also many clashes with the demands of the different roles that they occupied, for example those of wife, mother, full time teacher and part time student; these also brought about problems such as there being no place where they were able or allowed to study. These different identity roles could have an impact on the students' approach to their reading, learning and journal writing. For example, it is interesting to note that a common tendency is for students to relate to the readings as teachers rather than learners. Often, they tended to summarise the readings in the form of what they have learnt they should do as teachers in their classrooms, rather than absorb the content as learners themselves. Ayanda wrote of needing to find a balance between his commitments as a teacher, trade unionist, and student as well as community organiser.

Gadija wrote of the shifts in identity that she underwent between her working and social life and her academic one. Although she herself separated her social and academic identities, she found that others in her social and professional life positioned her differently. She was asked to speak at assemblies and school functions and to present programmes at schools, which she enjoyed. However, she was frustrated by comments from her colleagues and friends that, by doing research, she was 'prying into the lives of others'. She also encountered female friends who asked her spouse why he allowed her to study.

They are of the opinion that I should be at home mothering a family. At this stage I usually change the conversation to 'the latest sales at clothing stores!' In a way my identity has changed. I've shifted from a traditional Muslim woman who was satisfied with a college diploma, to a Muslim woman who enjoys reading and writing about different things; teaching about it and not afraid to present her work at conferences at different universities in and outside of Western Cape. I think my identity shift was definitely an academic one and a move from traditional way of thinking and writing about any topic.

(Gadija:6)

None of the students spoke of having a secure academic identity. Some felt close. Ayanda, the politically concerned man quoted earlier, wrote that had been younger than his classmates but was always in the top three of his class. He attributed this to his family having been involved in education and that he was always curious to know what his parents were doing when they were busy with books. However, he related that he had developed a sense of insecurity and loss of confidence in his real abilities as a result of his peers claiming that he only got good marks because of favours from his teachers who were his parents' colleagues. In a later entry, he commented to his partner that he felt his real self and academic self were not the same. As if his

academic identity was a garment he donned when needed. He responded to an entry from his partner:

Everybody has grown so clever that they have politicised every aspect of life. I am sorry today I have decided to be myself and shelve this academia behaviour. My voice should be heard. These people who got educated before us realised that knowledge change with time and they don't die before are challenged. Then they declared academic authority. So they control what is to enter the knowledge industry. (Ayanda:as PR2)

This is another conscious act of identity. He has a sense of the social construction of power. He seems to imply that it was only through being 'academic' that one had any power, and that while he was not academic he could not have ownership of knowledge (it was not his to own). It is interesting to note that, whilst there were conflicts of identities for him, he has agency in that he takes a stand in his writing.

As I stated earlier, the power of an identity is in the allowances it blocks or yields. Identity, or a sense of self, can determine the quality or essence of learning. Sometimes, confusion was expressed as to what was allowed in their writing:

My journal partner commented on what I regarded as critical thinking. He said I acted as an author myself. I really can't understand because I thought my opinion was clear and it was indicating my understanding of the text. (Noluntu:8)

This is a good example of confusion around who is allowed to act (Williams, 1993) – of the 'naturalisation' of agency by members in the institution. It is also a good example of the constraining factor of a perceived possibility for selfhood that Clark and Ivanič, and others (1997; Ivanič, 1998; Ivanič & Weldon, 1999) speak of.

Jasmine wrote that after the prompt for the first entry, she was not quite sure what was expected of her, so she wrote her entry 'expecting criticism and constructed recommendations for future writings' (Jasmine:l4). Gadija wrote of being very inhibited at first and said it took a while to get into the journal writing exercise and adapt to the requirements in terms of relaxed 'dialogue'. She said that at first, she had tended to write 'very essay-like', in a formal tone, but that soon the writing became 'more conversational-like';

I did not want to put in too much detail, since I was concerned that the person reading it at the other end would get bored or even not have the time to read it. It was beneficial getting feedback and more than anything I think I enjoyed the relaxedness of that type of writing. (Gadija:CI)

It seems that the perceived allowances had shifted for her. There was relief that she could impart agency

Glimmerings of confidence and a more secure sense of self came out in various situations. Obviously, positive feedback on an assignment was a great boost. Coming to see feedback as a dialogue with a team member; a developmental tool rather than a judgmental sentence, also helped towards confidence building. Jasmine wrote of coming to see feedback as ‘a necessary yet daunting aspect of growth and development in any learning programme’ (Jasmine:4). Pearl wrote that she had experienced a great jolt to her identity: ‘For a mature student like me, at a critical time in my life I really found it difficult to adapt to the high standard of academic work’ (Pearl:6). At first, she wished she had had a different background, and for ‘a miraculous change of identity’, but later realised there were others who felt the same way as a result of the mismatch between the social context which constructed their identity in the past and the new one they had now entered. However, rather than things changing overnight, they worsened before they got better. She experienced extreme anxiety whilst writing her first assignment (for another course), especially due to the fact that she was a mature student. She wrote that she had been ‘freaked out’ knowing that her lecturer was going to assess her work because she was worried about what another adult was going to think of her work. ‘It actually made me feel like a child again. For example, I felt inferior and assured myself that his comment would only be negative statements such as ‘What is this?’ or ‘What are you writing?’.’ Fortunately she was pleasantly surprised when she got positive comments and suggestions as to how she could overcome her shortcomings. One of our course readings helped her to see feedback as necessary and something she could learn from, rather than a judgement, which is how she had perceived it. She concluded her entry wanting to congratulate the lecturer for ‘the delicate way in which he assessed my work’, explaining that besides the positive comments, he did point out some of her shortcomings, giving the example, ‘Your context and experiences are always interesting, but are not relevant in an essay such as this’ (Pearl:6). She came to regard feedback as something that could be constructive rather than judgemental or critical. This was a new revelation and, she felt, a great achievement for her. She did also relate how she was upset at receiving a low mark for another assignment (on cognitive development) a short while later, and immediately questioned the fairness of the assessment, but on reading the feedback, came to understand why she had

received this mark. Furthermore, on discussing it with one of her lecturers, she came to understand how she could improve on it and decided to rewrite the essay. She added,

In spite of all my personal problems and academic shortcomings, I can confidently say I have grown while doing this course. For example, the fact that I have learnt to accept feedback as positive criticism and not as something personal is indeed a great achievement for me. (Pearl:6)

This illustrates a sense of communication and negotiation of meaning. At the end of the year, she wrote of her developed confidence and research and writing abilities.

Although the emerging academic identity did bring with it new allowances, it also brought new social challenges. In her reflective essay, one student wrote that learning to write academically brought about a growth of confidence for her and inspired her to become more involved in class discussions. However, on her return to her school, as free thought and critical discussions were not welcomed during staff meetings, she said she experienced a great deal of negativity from her senior management whenever she attempted to implement or share an experience from university. As a result, she decided to resign from her school. What happened here supports the differences that Northedge (2003a) outlines regarding the differing ways in which debate and questioning are perceived between professional and academic discourses.

I now look at development of dialogue, reflective functioning, agency and voice in students' literacy practices here. All of these depend on a sense of self and are affected by the learner's or writer's sense of self.

Agency

It is worth lending consideration to the context here. I believe that agency relies on cultural capital; the more *au fait* one is with that culture, the easier it is to feel 'at home' and able to act within it. Most of these students felt themselves to be in an alien environment for one reason or another, being asked to communicate in an unexpected and unpractised way, and regarding me, a co-responder to their journals, as a judgemental authority. They were asked to write about themselves, so that I could get to know them and they could get to know each other, but often in a second language, as opposed to their mother tongue, as well as one perceived as highfalutin, (often their perception seemed to be that they should, or were expected to, use big words, for example). None of these forms of communication were ones in which they felt comfortable or

‘themselves’, which meant that they were *adopting* an identity (at first); later they became more established in their new identity.

In Chapter 5, I outlined the typical classroom situation experienced by these students in their schooling as having involved the teacher or textbook imparting (uncontested) knowledge to the learners. Communities of practice, classroom discussions or group work were seldom encouraged and the idea of reflecting in their learning – critical thinking, or creating a dialogue in their writing was new to them. They perceived the purpose of writing was to give back facts to the teacher. Most of these students now had to develop an understanding that dialogue and reflection were part of the academic literacy practice (and that this is how knowledge is constructed), and that they were allowed to take agency in their learning. This was a discovery for many students. Dialogue also comes in many forms – that with reader/audience, with the text, with the self, with the partner, and with some unknown space. Given that agency depends on social relationships, dialogue is an important element in the development of agency. Agency in learning seems to stem from the types of relationships formed or adopted during the learning process. Agency also seems to relate to the extent to which learning is regarded as a social rather than an individual activity. The relationships adopted during the learning process include those with peers, teachers, ‘authorities’ (and critical thinking) and with the texts – both read and produced.

Ingleton and Cadman (2000:3) explain that having agency is acting with confidence and they put this ability to act with confidence down to past and present experiences of social relationships. The social experiences in their learning environments of the students in my study involved being confident when they repeated the ideas of others and not when they questioned or carried out critical thinking. Kalman explains Bakhtin’s (1981) view that ‘Writing is dialogic because it evokes a response.’ (2004:256). Students in my study had to come to understand this idea. This new understanding was part of the repositioning process.

I regard agency as a relational attribute. It depends on dialogue – with oneself, others, and texts. By ‘reflective functioning’ I refer to the writer’s engagement with their self. Baynham (2000) speaks of reflection as an agentic activity – it encourages. My concept of dialogue in journal

writing refers to a willingness or openness to engage with the reader (journal partner). I see this dialogue as aiding reflective functioning in that there is a responder who encourages which furthers more thought and reflection. ‘Voice’ in writing is the expression and visibility or transparency of the agency of the writer. Dialogue in the journals, therefore has to do with writing for or speaking to a particular interlocutor, who then becomes a mirror, in which one’s own practice is reflected. This creates a consciousness of the writing/speaking self. The dialogue also has to do with this being more than a one-way mirror: the reflections go both ways; allowing a sense of self, and a possibility of modelling - mimicking, copying - then of diverging, arguing, disagreeing (or indeed the other way around). This encourages the development of the authorial self in academic writing.

In this section I try to illustrate developments of reflective functioning, dialogue, and agency. What follows is a rough division of levels of dialogue and reflection evident in journal writing. I have tried to distinguish between initial tentativeness on the part of students towards dialogue, where there is little reflection, evidence of beginnings of reflective functioning, and established dialogue and reflection in the journal writing. Kalman, in a study of adults who became literate late in life, argues that it involves ‘a gradual and continuous repositioning of the learners’ self vis-à-vis written culture’ (2004:253). What seems to be evident in journals is a deconstruction (for example, with ideas of knowledge – as a product, with agency) and then a reconstruction – and of negotiation and renegotiation of literacy practices. What I hope to do in this section is consider the positioning and repositioning (cf. Wortham, 2001) – how students move from passive nothing-to-offer in their writing to more independent assertive agency.

I begin with my analysis of a case study to illustrate developing agency, dialogue and reflective functioning in one student.

Analysis of a Case study

Phumla’s ‘becoming’ was very evident through the course. By way of illustration, I track some of her development here. In her first term’s reflection, Phumla spoke of having to do the longest reading she had to do in ten years – a chapter in a book in preparation for her first assignment. She had not known how to approach assignments other than getting books from the library and going through them word by word at the cost of sleepless nights and grasping very little of what

she had read. She said she relied on the notes from her lecturer and handed in a ‘meaningless’ assignment in order to meet the deadline. On receiving the assignment back and seeing her mark, she said she felt demoralised and almost gave up her studies. A while later she realised that it was worth concentrating on the feedback given by her lecturer more than simply the mark, and feedback came to be an important factor in her learning process. She added that she realised the injustice she did to her own learners regarding their writing, by giving meaningless comments such as ‘please improve’ and ‘work hard’. She came to see feedback as dialogical.

In an early entry, Phumla wrote that, while she was busy trying to gain confidence in writing, she felt it was important not to reference (in her journal writing). By this I think she meant that she did not want to take quotes from her readings, but rather wanted to shape ideas on her own, as she stated that she felt it was important to use her own words so that she understood what she was writing about and could give the reader a clear sense of what she was saying. This is illustrative of a desire to become the agent of her own writing. In an entry at the beginning of her second semester, there is evidence of development of agency in her learning and approach to writing, when she engages actively with her readings, and appears to have changed from writing to a general and unknown reader to directing her journal writing at her journal partner, referring to her partner’s responses and own stated interests. Later, she wrote of her progress during the literature review assignment, where she had found six journal articles and a few books on the topic she wished to investigate, she mentioned that she was concerned about how she linked all this information, and she also noted that, on reading these texts, she was made aware of a different view of the topic and realised that this may force her to change her topic (from writing about what motivates teachers to writing about what demotivates teachers), and she commented: ‘You can see how the literature review is challenging; it really forces someone to consult a number of readings before you decide on what you really want to write about’. She continued to explain how some of her initial ideas were contradicted by her readings. She mentioned her intentions to discuss her topic with her colleagues and then her lecturers. Here there is agency; she *acts*, she thinks about what she has read, *considers* it, is *affected* by it, changes her mind, and shapes her ideas, and is *alert* to this. She also questions, and is not totally confident. Also, she was engaged with the content and in finding information, this she was not ‘an empty vessel’. In her entry, she shares, reflects, expresses her opinion,

clarifies her difficulties and asks for advice. Towards the end of the year she wrote about what an ‘eye-opener’ the literature review exercise had been and how much she had enjoyed it.

I am now ready to hand my literature review and I am a different person. I have cognitively developed⁴. This is the area I long wanted to know, because as a School Head I am expected to research and resource teachers but I did not have the skills. Through this course I am eager to go back to work and put what I have learnt in practice. At the same time I am now using the skill of downloading information to work on the leadership assignment. I can assure you I am a confident writer now because of EDN523 course. (Phumla:2nd sem5)

A response to Phumla from her partner illustrates how she has taken agency and has created a dialogic approach within her learning, through which she comes to new understandings. At the end of the year she produced a rich portfolio, where she reflected on various aspects of the course and three essays for her other courses. She claimed that the journal writing, although different to essay writing, actually built her confidence as a writer for her essays. In reflecting on her literature review assignment, she said that, although she had gathered a lot of information, she had at first not known how to start and whether the review should be like an essay. She had approached her peers but found that she was ahead of them as they were still searching for information. She had decided to come up with subheadings and grouped her information accordingly. She then consulted the Writing Centre, but became frustrated because they advised her to go and start afresh as there was no linkage and coherence in her writing: her introduction did not correlate well with the content and the paper was generally ‘mixed up’. She then narrowed down her topic (from ‘factors that motivate teachers’ to ‘social cognitive theories of motivation’). She refers to this as ‘a tedious exercise’ as it involved looking for new information again and she found it difficult to get old journals. She met with a group of classmates to check if she was on the right track and they agreed to keep a check on each other’s progress. She did a second draft and gave it to a colleague who advised her to improve on her ‘linkage’ and gave her courage to proceed. She then consulted with me and got positive feedback about her progress. This propelled her forward more confidently, and now that she knew she was on the right track, she felt more certain about getting information. She began to access online journals and thoroughly enjoyed doing so. She stated:

What I have observed with writing the literature review is that you can never stop writing, you keep on adding information. I enjoyed the exercise so much that I read extensively. I also realized that peer assistance plays a vital role in this regard.

⁴ A term, she had probably borrowed from her readings.

...In short I can say writing a literature review is a tedious exercise. Also there is ample information on the internet but if you do not know how to retrieve information, you might feel there is no information. I really enjoyed writing this assignment and I have never seen myself reading extensively like I did with this literature review. (Phumla)

This is quite a move, considering her earlier struggles. This is what she had to say in her portfolio at the end about three of her essays for other courses:

EDN 486 W Teachers and Classrooms: Outcomes-Based Education.

I wrote this assignment the beginning of the year when I did not have confidence in writing because of my educational background. I panicked so much and did not know where to start. Also I did not know anything about referencing so I handed the assignment without acknowledging the writers, mostly I used the lecture notes. We were given some readings during lectures and were advised to read extensively but unfortunately I did not even know how to search for information in the library, so I just wrote the assignment based on the lecture notes. At this time, I also did not know anything about writing centre. ... However, even if I had information regarding writing centre, I would not have consulted them because at this juncture I had written essays before during my tertiary training, so I had been convinced that I was a good writer. I realized that things were taking a different direction when I was given back the assignment. The mark lowered my morale and this was the time when I knew about writing centre and also through Introduction to Studies in Education course, I managed to improve my writing skills. Though the mark was low but I was impressed about the feedback, it was positive and this also contributed to my cognitive development. I did not argue my essay critically; I just put down the points. I can say that from this assignment there was improvement with regards my academic literacy. I consulted colleagues, writing centre and used information gained from Introduction to Education Studies. By this time I was also exposed on how to use a computer by Humanities Department. Further, the topics such as referencing, critical thinking which are covered in Introduction to Education Studies course also served as an eye opener in my academic writing.

At this stage, she lacked confidence and she was not acquainted with practices, such as referencing or searching for information. Her previous practices had not equipped her with these skills. She did learn about the use of support in her literacy endeavours. By the time she handed in the next assignment for the same course, although there was some residual confusion, she had gained some confidence through improved understandings of the institutional practices required.

EDN 486 W Language and learning

There was tremendous improvement with regards my development as a writer. Though I was still not confident with writing because I struggled to read and make meaning out of the text but there was slight improvement. I was still confused more specially with referencing because when going through this essay, one will realize that in some instances I had not referenced. There was improvement because I had divided the essay with subheadings and I did not panic much when I worked on it. The contributing factor was that I had already covered the topic in Introduction to Education Studies hence there was easy understanding of the readings. This time I consulted some readings as I was exposed to how to search for information in the library through Introduction to Studies in Education course. At the same time my reading skills had improved because we had tutorials which were very informative. Further my writing skills improved because during the above mentioned course we discussed ideas on how to write an essay and the consultation with writing centre served a good purpose. In addition, there was improvement in my writing skills

because of journal writing. This free writing builds someone's confidence. My major problem here was on how to write introduction and conclusion.

She had made use of support available to her, such as the writing centre and peer group discussions and by the stage of her last assignment, towards the end of the year, she had gained further confidence and understanding.

EDN 487 W — Philosophy of Education

There was tremendous improvement in terms of my writing skills and performance. Also by the time I was working on this assignment I did not even consult writing centre, I felt I was already confident to work on the essay without assistance. I was able to search for information from the library without assistance and I really enjoyed reading extensively. Referencing was done properly. I noticed that there was improvement on how to introduce an essay and I was also able to come up with an appropriate conclusion. I no longer panic when I am given an assignment, what is important is to understand the question and at the same time I am also a confident reader. I know that behind academic writing is critical thinking.

From the above reflection on the three assignments, I can say my journey in UCT has been a positive one. All the courses have contributed in my cognitive development and are relevant to me as an educator.

Here, she appears to feel able to break free and come in to herself.

Development in dialogical relationships: positioning and co-construction of knowledge

Here I provide evidence of different levels of dialogical relationships and positioning in the journal writing. I try to show how these can affect potential for reflection, and construction of meaning. In the following examples, I illustrate entries in which there is a lack of dialogical relationship. The 'positioning' (cf. Wortham, 2001) of the students as responders or dialogical partners is one of having little to offer. Often responding is done in a teacherly mode or positioning.

It was not easy to detect much taking on of agency or development in the local students. As has been mentioned in Chapter 5, almost all of them were working full time whilst studying part time. For those of them who were still working, their lives were generally pressured and they rushed between work, home and studies. This meant that there was little time or space for reflection on their selves, their practices or their role in their learning or writing. Their stressors included work related politics and crises, stress related illnesses, and familial and social obligations which affected their abilities to devote time and effort to study. Some of these local students claimed that they did not need this course because they knew English and how to write. Possibly, as a result of their irritation at being *forced* to do this course (and possibly, a time

issue), they did not apply themselves; for example, they did not write regular journal entries and tended to hand in bulk entries written in one sitting; thus a true reflection of their development in ideas or writing is not possible. This could be due to either not seeing any purpose to the journal exercise or not having time to do it.

Sometimes it seemed difficult for partners to get into meaningful dialogue with one another in their journals. As I have mentioned in Chapter 6, many adopted their teacher-as-authority identity from their working contexts and wrote in a pedantic discourse style, especially at the beginning. They were not au fait with the 'ways' of the new institution – or their identities and roles (and their allowances) within it. They did not have the cultural capital at that stage.

Zukisani, a school principal, seemed, for much of the time, not to grasp any purpose to the journal entries, other than to satisfy some requirement, which was not for him. There was little sense that he thought he might gain from his 'reflections' in his journal and there appears to be little sense of an interested audience; his journal writing was emotionless and distant, with little sense of narrative or cohesion, and no 'voice' discernible.

Generally, their first responses to each other consisted of grammatical corrections, and one or two generalised judgemental or pedagogic statements or critiques on what they had written.

Thank you for making a good attempt in answering the question. You are in the right direction, but you need a bit of practise in order to master the skills of answering questions. (Athi:PR)

This teacherly identity role as journal partner was common, especially at the beginning. It was a mode most of them were used to. Kwandie pointed out to her partner Viwe that she had a problem with long sentences in her writing and she referred Viwe to the library 'to select the English Grammar books and read them'. This mode constructs a distant relationship rather than a personal sharing with the journal partner. Sometimes responses were very brief, such as 'Your mind-map is meaningful' (PR5to:Lindiwe), and 'Your journal makes sense to me' (PR6to:Lindiwe). Rather than invite dialogue, these responses create closure.

Often early entries to each other appeared to be cautious, partly because they were not yet acquainted with each other, and possibly due to an awareness that I was 'listening in' and might

judge their writing or what they wrote about. Wilma's partner at first used to respond to her journal entries as if he was writing about her entry to someone else (myself). I pointed out a few times that he needed to write to her directly. Xolane's partner, a senior teacher at his school, was aware that he was to respond to Xolane's entry, so he posed two questions. Whilst they could be seen as prompting reflection, they were not posed in a dialogical manner. It was as if he was ambivalent as to who he was writing for – for me to see the good questions he had formed, or for his peer with whom he shared similar feelings of crisis.

Hi [Xolane],

1. What are the root causes of your crisis regarding your reading and identity?
2. How would you resolve crisis?

I share the same sentiments with you.

Good luck!

(PR3to:Xolane)

Although it is still teacherly and distant, there is an attempt at sharing as a fellow struggler.

Brian made more attempt at dialogue. However, his early entries were tentative in this dialoguing, for example, he critically analysed his partner's first journal entry. This did engage with the content but the 'speaking position' was that of an expert talking to an intern.

The opening makes a big impact on the reader and it is provocative. I liked it!

Your first lines display a clarity in your thought and gives a clear sense that you are grappling with the term academic literacy...

'I did not meet the requirements of a Matriculation exemption', is very well positioned in the context of the journal entry. It showed honesty and makes a statement I think almost in rebellion to the school system. ...

There is a depth in your writing which is quite endearing to me as the reader. Your personal reflections carry with it a degree of vulnerability, yet there is a willingness to be real to your feelings about your background, academic writing and academia.

(Brian:1)

Although he was positive and trying to be friendly, he was not offering much of his self here; he restricted his response to commenting on his partner's entry. This is understandable, when he had not yet come to know his partner. His later entries became more relaxed. I narrate some of his agentic development in the next section.

A few students (usually male) maintained this teacherly mode throughout the exercise. Siya's journal partner tended to correct his grammar and spelling through all this written entries. Both Siya's partner and Pearl's were school principals, and they appeared to maintain this identity throughout in their journal responses.

Comments on [Pearl's] work:

*strengths

- your journal is good and relevant
- well typed
- I hope the course shall benefit you as you state, good introduction.

*weakness

- too brief
- make it appear in a letter form.

(PR1to:Pearl)

Yanga's partner commented on his drafts and redrafts in his journal responses, focussing mostly on grammar – possibly safer than engaging with the content.

In your literature review this time you have adhered to advice, you have defined your topic and clearly stated your position in the opening paragraph. Minor mistakes of omissions and spelling like the word 'recognize' was spelt out with a 'z' instead of 's'. The punctuations for referencing still needs to be looked into because in some instances you use ; (semicolon) in others you use : (colon) because those are in the same button in the computer or what? ... Otherwise you seem to be enjoying the topic and the adjustment is fine.

(PR20to:Yanga)

Khan and his partner's entries became part drafts of their assignments. It seems that they felt more comfortable with this (or considered it a smarter use of limited time), rather than dialoguing over their readings or other aspects of their lives or selves. Certainly in the case of Khan's partner, this kept his identity in a safe, authoritative role; he tended to dictate rather than discuss. This pedantic rather than personal mode is much less vulnerable than disclosing one's self.

I stopped @ the (pg6) :: you've repeated yourself & contradicted yourself. If this is a lit review, you should not include your own opinions & ideas. You also need to integrate what theory is saying to come up c a coherent, concise product @ present, you've made lots of scattered points that don't really link. There's also no logical flow or structure. You need to get more of a focus. Otherwise you've got a fairly comprehensive reference list, you just need to integrate it.

(PRtoKhan:September)

And another

You start by summarising the reading too closely. Towards the latter part of your essay, you summarise the reading far more clearly, and you end very well. Moral of story: don't try and summarise too closely.

(PRtoKhan:October)

This instructive mode was maintained through the course by his partner.

There were many other types of dialogue in writing, with some managing to be discursive – but not about the course content or readings. For example, Cameron and Hettie both wrote quite extensive entries; however, the discursive parts of their entries were about themselves and their

interesting lives and even reflections on the country and on education. Almost all of their entries included a summary of the week's reading, but no dialogue or 'voice' was evident within the summary part. Their responses to each other contained comments on each other's general entries and questions to each other about their lives (reading like a spoken conversation), but they did not discuss the readings or their summaries, or question each other on their understandings of the readings.

Qagamba's partner wrote to her in a formal, distant register. He related on a surface level to what she had written and posed questions for her to think further – as a teacher might. Although he acknowledged what she had shared of her affective responses to course content, he did not engage with the content of what they had both read and there was no sharing of himself with his partner.

Thank you for showing your emotions on Saatjie Bartman. I hope that the issue has been resolved even though some parts are still missing.

I am sorry to learn that some of the readings are faint and not readable. Try to talk to the lecturers about that situation.

Now that you know that writing is an important communication how are you going to make sure you keep up to the expected standard that you have been taught at this university?

On classical theories of learning you seem to have read and understood them well. Now I want to know how these theories can help you, or what actually you have learnt as a teacher on these theories. Are these theories very important to you and if so why? (PR3to:Qagamba)

Here, the two statements acknowledge the content of Qagamba's entry but do not share reciprocally. The questions he poses do invite a response, but I am not sure the writer was actually ready to share. Again, there might have been a sense of me as observer, checking that he had said the 'correct' thing.

Due to his background (English speaking, middle class, from Cape Town), Marlon had more cultural capital to start with. In the following entry, he shares more of himself than do those I have illustrated so far. In this entry he is responding to particular statements in his partner's entry, which he quotes back to his partner:

Coming back to your journal entry I agree with and share this aspect of change that you mention: 'Emotionally I have changed over the course of my life. In terms of being a balanced individual emotionally. I have grown a bit. My early years were quite shy and private. To a degree I have retained that sense of privacy but have also opened up to show my true self.'

I can relate to this experience of change, particularly while attempting this course. I noticed in myself a real growth not only intellectually, but emotionally and socially. Its this time in reflection

when this 'growing' happens and its important that like with yourself, my true self can come to the fore.

Your comments on Ontogeny vs Phylogeny for me, further substantiate your earlier points. 'We are bombarded with the lure of conformity, of having to agree with the greater conscience and consciousness when we know deep down that we are not like that but would rather keep the peace than rock the boat.'

This lure to conformity I suppose is in conflict to this notion of wanting to grow and change, particularly if the society in which we find ourselves would like us to remain as we are, predictable and manageable. (Marlon:6)

There is more evidence of dialogue and reflection on what his partner has written in that he relates to his own experiences. In responding to the second quote from his partner, he rephrases it and then, in his third paragraph, he builds on from her ideas, with further reflection, thus constructing meaning for himself in the process. Although he has not mentioned the reading of the week, he has made use of what he has read – in his comments on changes through the lifespan. Marlon always made a concerted effort to *dialogue* with his partner; commenting in detail on extracts from her journal. This effort at dialogue promotes reflective functioning. It is illustrative of agency being taken on through positioning (Harré, 2008; Davies & Harré, 1990). I think that this habit may have transferred to his academic writing and bringing in of other voices – where he was able to comment on, rephrase and construct meaning from ideas he comes across in his readings.

Further dialogue is visible in the journals in that a great deal of spurring each other on was evident in some journal relationships. Students encouraged each other, on the topics they had chosen, comments they had made in class, their writing, their decisions, their ideas and their stress relief. Pedro referred to his journal partner as a source of inspiration who gave positive comments and thought that Pedro had so much insight. Encouragement appears to have been a building block in achieving reflective functioning, as it named activities, or sign-posted goals, struggles, victories or progress and thus initiated reflection on aspects such as how to achieve or tackle them. Mpho wrote to her partner about committing themselves to their reading and writing together. Her partner agreed, commenting that it was important to pause and reflect on what one had learnt. These two continued to support each other in discussing their practices. For example, in one response to a depressed entry from Mpho, her partner acknowledged it was hard to paraphrase and shared that she tended to play with words within the content and tried to formulate what the author's argument was in her own words. She also expressed concern over

Mpho's low feelings and offered to arrange an outing for the two of them. This partnership went beyond their academic studies, with support being offered on social and academic fronts.

I enjoy to be your partner because as married women our conversation and talking go beyond our studies to our marriage and families. Thank you for sharing with me whatever!

(PR12to:Mpho)

Some co-construction of knowledge grew out of journal dialogues through learning about each other's opinions and modelling good habits:

The relationships and conversations with fellow B.Ed. (H) students have been wonderfully enlightening and have richly blessed me. I feel so blessed to have [Khubani] as a journal partner, seeing and listening to his views on South African education and growing in understanding and empathy - rather than sympathy. He has so much wisdom and courage, and always speaks and writes from such a humble heart.

(Sue:RE1)

For regular journal writers, the exercise seemed to provide a space for becoming – as Carma's partner noted of her:

Well [Carma], after reading quite a few of your journal entries, I can see that the insecurities you had at the beginning, has decreased by now. You certainly sound more confident and talk about things you couldn't talk about in the beginning. I can definitely see you moving forward becoming the academic writer you would like to be.

(PRtoCarma:4)

Jasmine wrote that she had got into the habit of asking others to read her written work and that, whilst compliments were welcome, she was open to criticism as long as it was honest and constructive. She added that this was something she would like to encourage with and among her learners. Similarly, Khan claimed he developed through sharing his drafts with his peers. This, despite his partner's teacherly mode of relating to him (illustrated earlier). In his reflective essay, he wrote that he felt that his essay writing was enhanced through the 'frank and honest' feedback from his peers. This feedback included comments on technical aspects, such as referencing, on maintaining his line of argument rather than letting it 'fizzle out', on the volume of his readings for his assignments and his resultant loss of focus, and his understandings of the essay questions, together with advice on how to improve these.

Whilst often the dialogue developed through the journal partnerships was informal and not always particularly focussed on the week's readings, its importance seems to be that it made a space for expression of self and discussion or practise around certain practices, a dialogic process

which included relating to others within the practices, and in this drew out reflective practices (which were sometimes very new ways of behaving in these students' literacy practices).

Development in agency in literacy practices

Few students arrived at the institution with the ability to incorporate their own voice in a dialogue with others in their writing. Initially, they struggled with the idea of commenting on the ideas of others. Again, I begin with an analysis of a case study, tracking development of self and agency in one student's academic writing.

Analysis of a Case study

In this case, I start with an example of an early attempt to develop the skill of commenting on the ideas of others (and bringing in one's voice to one's writing). Whilst often the dialogue developed through the journal partnerships was informal, and not always particularly focussed on the week's readings, its importance seems to be that it made a space for expression of self and discussion or practise around practices, which included relating to others within the practices, and drew out reflective practices. The extract below is from Funeka's first assignment. Whilst she had not yet quite 'broken away' into her own line of argument, she was 'chirping in' to what is essentially a long quote, by linking or providing cohesive markers by commenting on why she supported what she had quoted, sometimes by simply rewording, or commenting on what learning she had taken from what she had quoted – and also linking in to her own experience.

'Writing is an act of identity in which people align themselves with socio-culturally shaped possibilities for self-hood, playing their part in reproducing or challenging dominant practices and discourses, and the values, beliefs and interests they embody' (Ivanic 1998 pg 32). I agree with this statement made by Ivanic, really this is the way of showing some identity of how is your writing being shaped. 'Writing is a particularly silent form of social action for the negotiation of identity' (Ivanic 1998 Pg 32). That is why I say it is very important to know how to write in an academic way so that you can be in a better way to cope with writing in higher education. 'When people enter what is for them a new social context such as higher education, they are likely to find that its discourses and practices support identities which differ from those they bring with them' (Ivanic 1998 Pg 33). I fully agree with what is said by Ivanic, from my own experiences I brought a different way of writing in the university which led me to have difficulties in writing essay and assignment. (Funeka:ass1)

There was obviously an awareness of the need for referring to readings and commenting on them. It is not totally clear, from her comments, that she quite understood what the author of her reading meant, except for the last sentence that she quoted, which she could relate to from her own experience. As I related earlier in the 'Sense of Self and identity in journal writing' section,

with regard to Funeka's struggles in writing assignments and disregarding feedback on them, in June, she reflected on the writing of this assignment, which she had failed, and commented that there were so many difficulties that she experienced in the writing of it and that she was not comfortable enough to do it on her own; she had felt very alone in the process and did not talk to anyone about her writing nor show anyone her writing. She had indicated that she had not found the topic difficult but had struggled with critically discussing it. She stated that she had not been clear about how to construct a logical argument, and knew little about referencing. She also said that she did not know how to draft an essay and just worked on her own 'scribbling and jotting down some notes' from books she had read in the library. She then wrote the essay and gave it to someone else to type, as she was computer illiterate. Unfortunately there were a lot of mistakes made by the typist, which Funeka stated she had had no control over. She did not bother to collect it for the feedback after it was marked, not appearing to realise that there was any benefit in taking note of the feedback given by her lecturer.

In a later journal entry, which was actually a draft towards a new assignment, she was able to blend her comments and her quotations from her readings more smoothly; there is an easier flow of thought:

Many children are slow learners as a result of financial impoverishment, and poverty may cause physical handicaps that prevents learning. For example, the slow learner most often experiences difficulty in reading. This is directly related to his lack of communication skills, speaking and listening. These skills are neglected in the homes of the poor, where children are often encouraged to be seen and not heard. The vocabulary development of these children may suffer as a result of the lack of communication with adults. ...

I think these learners should be fitted into a situation which is planned so suite their needs not into a planned situation. Because of the inability of the slow learning child to respond to many and diverse elements. His school environment should be more carefully controlled and planned.

(Funeka:10)

Here, she was more comfortable with using the first person and her mode was more confident – in that she used instructive (teacherly) words, such as 'should'. Although the flow of thought was clearly informed by her readings, there was no mention of any of them. So it is possible that she was still facing an 'either/or' issue as to whose voices were expressed (either those of her readings or her own). Funeka felt her life was changed by learning how to use the computer, for both writing essays and being able to email her lecturers and classmates. Technological skills gave her a new sense of power over her work – which enabled her agency – on a number of

levels. She was a full time teacher, and before learning about email, she and her journal partner had struggled with time to exchange their journals. Whereas before, she had felt constrained in her capacity to swap entries and to show her drafts to others, email enabled her to send entries and drafts to her partner and to us. She was also able to correct her own errors and to edit what she had written. Her confidence grew through the course as she persevered. The introduction to her third assignment had a clear thesis statement and connection with her topic. There was also a sense of herself as author.

In any school there are a number of learners who cannot benefit from the organisation and curriculum of the average school. There should be a provision made for those learners who are faced with this problem.

In this topic I would like to discuss about the problems that faces the slow learner, the background, the characteristics, the causes and also what makes a slow learner. I will also try to come up with ideas on how to accommodate the slow learners in the classroom situation.

I am interested in this topic because I would like to know exactly what are the characteristics, aspects and impacts that make a slow learner. What methods of teaching that can help a slow learner to fit into the normal class? What type of curriculum can be of help and accommodate the slow learner.

(Funeka:ass3)

This development of her sense of self in relation to others and her reader, together with the allowances yielded by development in her technical skills and abilities to discuss her work and use of feedback, I believe all contributed to her strengthened agency and ‘visibility’ of voice in her writing. I think Funeka’s case emphasises my argument that agency is a relational attribute.

Levels of development in agency in literacy practices

In this final section, I illustrate evidence of different levels of agency in students’ reading and writing practices. I have related commentaries of reading and writing being regarded as meaningless chores rather than being done for the learner’s benefit. These previous practices and attitudes did not invite or encourage agency or voice. When students’ previous practices required that they trust the texts they were given to read, without questioning, or with no perceived allowances for their being able to grapple with the text for understanding it, it is not surprising that their ‘reading’ did not prioritise ‘comprehending’. I think students were aware that here they needed to include their own ideas relating to what authors say, but did not necessarily know what this practice (of engaging with the content of their readings) entailed. Some seem to have understood this to simply require a phrase indicating that they agreed with the author. Sometimes when students declared ‘I agree with [the writer]...’, it felt like a superficial relating to the reading, when they continued to simply summarize the reading rather than comment on it.

The weekly journal prompts each related to that week's reading – with the intention of drawing out the student's opinions on the content of the reading. As I have explained often, this was not an exercise or practise they had come across before. The first journal prompt had asked students what they expected of an academic literacy course. Siya's entry in response seems to be written with the idea that an academic 'voice' should be distant and to the point. He wrote the entry as if he believed that this journal 'assignment' was testing whether he had absorbed what had been told to him. He did not seem to conceive of it as an exercise in reflection, nor did he seem to have an idea of a reader who might be interested in his opinion. The use of bullets (possibly a practice from his professional role) and the use of a generalised 'one' (which had usually been previously taught as a formal literacy practice), both served to distance him, the writer, as a person, from the writing as a text.

- The Literacy course may offer skills in written and spoken language, through regular practise
- One may learn the foundation, golden rules of literacy
- Literacy course may help one to become a good academic writer and public presenter
- One must learn how to critically look into other people's written work
- One must learn how to express their opinions and feelings in an eloquent manner.

(Siya:1)

In an apparent continuation of his previous established practices, his journal entries, in preparation for his literature review, simply summarised what he had read, rather than engaged with his readings or his reader. His own commentary was non-existent. This could be a cultural issue as well in that it is likely that he did not feel comfortable writing about his ideas in an informal, personal style to me or even to a peer. In his first essay, Siya also simply related what was said in the readings. He wrote as if this was what he believed, or accepted unquestioningly. It was not his voice. Although he included a bibliography, he did not acknowledge or attribute any ideas to others in his text. This had generally improved by the end of the year, where he acknowledged more and referenced well, but he still slipped into relating or regurgitating ideas from the readings as if they were his own. Essentially he 'agreed' with all he read; he took it as 'the truth' rather than discerning what each author said, and how they differed or complemented each other; there was little critical thought. His positioning (cf. Ivanic & Camps, 2001) was simply behind and under the voices of others. He was not a voice, agreeing or dissenting, amongst these other voices.

Zimasa did not seem to see a point in relating thoughts about the readings in her journal writing. She tended to simply summarise the reading, so her voice, for the most part, was absent. There were other entries written by students which were not very engaging in dialogue in their writing, and simply related the general gist of the reading but did not engage much with it. For example, in her early entries, Qagamba wrote as if she was satisfying the lecturer (us) rather than engaging with the content herself:

The reading is reader friendly and points out ways of making learning effective and meaningful.
The issues raised are very useful and applicable in a classroom situation. (Qagamba:4)

Some students tended to 'relate' the reading – as in they wrote what the reading *does* in their own words (I am not sure they absorbed it) rather than relate *to* the reading. In other words, they chatted in their writing about the relevance of what it said to their own experiences. Xolane found it difficult to extract important points from readings. He talked of his 'dismal failure to reduce a text to a gist' (Xolane:3).

In terms of a sense of purpose and relating to learning, there was sometimes a passivity in expecting information to be provided rather than found:

I would like to do a literature search on student motivation. I will use any textbook or documents related to the research topic. I will use relevant literature to give background to topic and justification for my particular research. (Phendu:12)

Here, Phendu has a set idea for a topic, but appears to think that the literature search would provide an answer to the issue at his institution. He does not have much sense of discrimination as to what literature to search, simply any 'related to the topic', so he is not quite 'in the driver's seat'. He also appears to be writing to satisfy the lecturer (us), or satisfying a chore, rather than making himself sound interesting to engage with in written dialogue.

Emerging agency in learning practices

As mentioned, especially in the early entries, there was a tendency to summarise readings rather than engage with them. Summarising readings was an exercise traditionally performed for assessment (for someone else) and, although a good summary does require some cognitive functioning, in many students' previous practices, it may not have involved students actually looking for meaning for their selves in the readings. However, with regular journal writers, it is possible to trace development of engagement with readings and linking readings with their own

experiences or interests. For example, there was some development in the following entries by Zimasa:

I have learnt a great deal about writing from this reading. I have learnt that it is imperative to know how to write well and writing is a powerful tool in learning. I also learnt that writing should be taught rather than left to chance. I have learnt that as a teacher, I have to teach my students to write and learners (students) have to do a lot of writing. As a teacher I will also use the techniques in my classroom and respond to learners writing through journals to facilitate language learning and cognitive development. (Zimasa:12)

In this first extract she lists the main points she picked up in the reading. There is a jolting flow to the writing – it is list-like with no links between sentences. She does end with a resolve of her own as a result of what she learnt from her reading. This reading was on attention to engaging with one's reader. The next entry was more relaxed; it was less list-like; there was a smoother flow and more evidence of her having gained from the discussion. She herself was talking, and not simply following what one text said; her confidence and her voice were emerging:

in my literature survey, I shall be focussing my attention on my immediate area where I want to look at is multilingualism. ...I chose this topic because since I came to university of Cape Town, I heard people talking about multilingualism and its problems. Then I started reading about it and found the topic very interesting. I also learned that multilingual learning means recognition of the multilingual character of classroom, being prepared to use language or variety of language with which learners are most familiar or comfortable. ... I also learned that the home languages are the major resource the students bring to the classroom. Their languages are important and are not undermined, the languages bring home and school together and multilingual learning brings or encourages language awareness to the classroom. (Zimasa:16)

She continued in this entry to rattle off what she had found interesting in her readings, showing signs of enjoyment.

In terms of relating to the text of her reading, Lendy was aware that she needed a balance between her own opinion and that of the text; she said she had had to train her brain to remember facts written about in the readings in order to follow arguments and that she had learnt to put her own opinion aside while doing this and concentrate on the text. On coming to understand what critical thinking was, or making meaning personal, Lendy wrote,

It made me realise that I am confronted by things that I am familiar with and lots of information that are new to me. It can be quite difficult to absorb these new information at first, but as I force myself to except the authors viewpoint I get a better sense of what (s)he are writing about. The clash in myself disappear and this helps me to ask questions on what I read. This process helps me in drawing many conclusions on an article. (Lendy:4)

In this process of ‘forcing’ herself to ‘accept the author’s viewpoint’, she grappled to understand the ideas she was reading about and the ‘clash in herself’ disappeared; her confusion cleared up. This is certainly indicative of agency in her learning; she was constructing meaning for herself.

One reading gave Maggi confidence that she was doing something right, that she had thought she was doing wrong; that is, to-ing and fro-ing between the text and her own wandering thoughts. In fact, this is indicative of an engagement – a relationship between the reader and the writer. Jacky set up a dialogue in her journal with me, in which she related to the readings and then took the ideas further, usually relating to her experience as a teacher. This is also indicative of agency – essentially she was beginning to dialogue with her readings.

Qagamba, too, began the practice of reflecting on her reading. For example, in an entry towards the end of the first semester, she began to comment on what she had gleaned from the reading; she related the idea, then said how she liked the idea and related it to her own experience, and then went on to the next idea – which she was unconvinced of.

The process of coming to realise the power of writing promoted agency in students. Vuyiswa, an English teacher, said she intended to use journals in her language lessons. She claimed that, through the exercise, she came to understand that, as her writing was actually for a real reader, she needed to make it meaningful:

Entering of journals fortnightly has introduced me to the power of writing, which I did not get in my previous education. These journals helped me to collect data, arrange it such that it makes meaning to my writing partner. It also helped me to arrange ideas such that they can make sense to the reader. I feel I have gained a lot of experience by producing these journals. (Vuyiswa:RE4)

She now saw writing as a means of reflecting and making meaning – seeing it as an aid in organising her ideas for both herself and her reader. This is one way in which the journal exercise aided improvement in formal academic writing. Ayanda took lessons from the readings to inform himself and his teaching – for example, in the process of writing and developing or promoting a positive attitude towards writing, especially in seeing texts as meaningful communications, rather than meaningless data for exercise drills.

Agency also became visible in students' understanding of expectations of the institution and taking on of active learning; when they had a sense of purpose to their exercises, as is evident above with Vuyiswa and Ayanda. Vuyiswa related to readings through her own experience – the readings seemed to have provided answers, or perhaps named problems for some of her difficulties in teaching and in the way she studied. Pearl wrote that she learnt that one needs to think critically by building a link between one's own ideas and those of the author of one's reading. She continued to explain that one did this by structuring one's previous knowledge and experiences in one's mind and being submissive to the writer's authority in order to understand what they were writing about. In doing so, one often had to adjust one's own schemata in order to accommodate new ideas and information. She added that, whilst one needed to be 'submissive' (open) in order to understand what the writer was saying, she was pleased to learn that it did not mean that one necessarily had ultimately to be submissive to their viewpoint. She felt this brought out the critical thinker in her as a reader. Phumla (whose development in academic writing I narrated in my last section) was always engaged in her learning, relating to the content and her own experience. She enjoyed learning new ways of understanding – for example, how the brain processes information – like the hardware and software of computers. She said she battled with some subjects, such as human cognitive development, although she was determined to keep at her reading because she felt the theories could assist her in helping her learners. Many of Sibahle's entries talked of her own experiences at the school she taught. She did not always mention the readings, but her narratives related easily to the readings and lecture topic of the week. In one of her final entries, she wrote that she had taken the point about the importance of reading and the importance of reading for understanding.

Vuyo had a very clear idea of his relationship to reading. He saw the process as a communication between two individuals, the process including the writer's identity being reflected in the text and the reader able to interact with the thoughts expressed in the text and in mixing them with the reader's own experience and knowledge, to make meaning for themselves. He claimed that he read to fulfil his needs and increase his knowledge on a particular aspect. He commented that his reading affected his identity in that the content of what he read could have an impact in changing his attitudes, feelings and behaviour. He also claimed that the journal writing developed him in that he had had to write about himself, which he was not used to

doing. It also alerted him to the fact that each writer is an individual with their own understandings and experiences. He mentioned that he came to understand that writing is a means of learning:

I have realized that as we write we experience new ideas, observations, disagreements, and explanations from other people. Also as we write there is a deep engagement with our thoughts with what one writes. (Vuyo:June)

Yanga explained that when reading academic texts, he was alert to the style of writing and the potential usefulness for his own writing, thus looking at what he could learn; whilst reading academic texts he put himself 'in the boots of a writer'. He realised he did not read a newspaper in the same way: he tended to scan the newspaper and look for interesting headings; he was unrelated to the texts in this case. This sense of purpose, and ability to relate to his learning promoted reflective functioning and agency in Yanga. He wrote of an article he had read about poorly performing staff in schools. He gained insight into the fact that newly recruited teachers tended to get overloaded with classes, committees and extracurricular activities by the older leadership in the schools, which contributed to poor performance of staff in the schools. He continued to reflect on what this meant. In his discussion, he related a point from the reading, then connected it to his experience and pondered on it – towards a new insight. He reflected on the demotivation and mismanagement of staff by school leaders and old staff and realised that this has been happening for years in his country but that he had not thought of this being a cause of poor performance of staff. In attempting to think critically, he pondered further on what the reading had said.

In terms of sense of purpose and relating to learning, taking responsibility for their own learning may begin with being struck by something in a reading, being able to relate to it from their own experience and coming to think differently about an issue as a result. Phumla related how she has been teaching as she was taught and the readings served to critique these methods and provide ideas for improved practices:

My experience with this is that, I am never comfortable with my writing until the teacher mark it. The remarks that teachers make sometimes are abstract and learners cannot work with them to improve their writing. This statement is true, when I mark my learners writing I would just put a mark and a comment like, please improve or work hard without indicating the areas where they need to improve and this does not assist the learner in any way. (Phumla:2)

Jasmine wrote of being pleased with her emerging academic identity, having a better awareness of who her audience was and of the purpose of her writing. She started to consciously try to write with the aim of holding the reader's interest. She was determined to learn how to fit in and become a successful academic writer. However, there was still anxiety expressed in her mid-year reflection over preparing for assignments. She related feelings of insecurity and constant questioning as to her capabilities in relating her understandings in writing in an academically correct manner.

With some, the realisation of the need to construct meanings from texts and to take on an authorial identity themselves was a pleasant revelation. In her April reflection, Qagamba wrote that, although she had always reflected on her readings, she usually took the authors' views as right or correct. She added that, even when she did not subscribe to the author's views, she thought they knew better anyway. She had now come to understand that there can be diverse and sometimes contradicting views and that in her essays she could support or argue against authors' views. In other words, it seems that she learnt that she was allowed a voice and this was a 'coming of voice'. This is echoed in her second term reflection, where she wrote that, although she was not confident in positioning herself strongly in an essay, she now knew what it meant to have one's voice in an essay. She had also found that, whereas when she first came to the university, she got stuck at the start of the essay, her ideas now flowed once she started writing. Noluntu wrote in an entry, whilst doing her literature review, of her frustration at having to find her own readings for the literature review (as opposed to us giving them), but she found it 'an amazing discovery', having enjoyed the freedom and independence of the exercise. In his mid-year reflection, Brian (whose initial response to his partner I quoted from in my discussion of development of dialogue in journal writing), wrote about his initial feelings about his academic identity. He had been very nervous about fitting in and not having as much experience as his peers and therefore not keeping up with the work. He also said that he had never before felt bold or confident enough to actually make meaning of his own from a text; this was a new way of reading for him. Before, he had assumed that he had no right to 'demand that a text be relevant' to him or that it should serve a purpose. This is an illustration of a socially constructed perception of allowances. With this sort of attitude, power was held by the object – the text, rather than the subject – the reader or learner, in other words, rendering the learner as passive

rather than agentic. Brian learnt that agency was allowed. So making meaning was a new discovery and allowance in his learning. He enjoyed this new way of reading; he claimed that ‘making meaning and interrogating’ texts not only helped him to gain a better understanding of the text, but gave him ‘an ability to own the experience and to use what is relevant’ (Brian:REJune). He also reflected that he had not realised how language can actually impede one’s ability to learn and make sense of the world. In terms of a sense of purpose and relating to learning, in his reflection on his development through the course, Brian also highlighted the issue of critical thinking. He related to an essay that he had had to do for another course, which he had found difficult; he realised that critical thinking begins a lot sooner than the stage of attempting the essay, and mentioned that critically understanding the question should have been his first point of departure before attempting the essay. Having done this, he began to write his essay over a few days. He wrote

The critical thinking came at times when I did not often expect it. What I mean by this that the critical thinking happened in between physically writing the text, it came in the reflection in what I and written and read. The ability to link various texts and to see them in relationship to another and indeed myself is for me what critical thinking is all about. (Brian:RE)

So, he developed an ability to reflect, which promoted his agency.

Another prod towards agency came with conscious thinking of oneself as a reader or writer. For Wilma, one of the course readings⁵ helped her to regard herself as an aspiring writer: ‘As a writer one cannot really separate oneself from one’s writing. We may distance ourselves, but nevertheless it is what the writer thinks and feels he/she should be stating that is eventually put on paper’ (Wilma:3). She continued, ‘Writing this, I have listened to myself as I write. I like the way I sound now, positive and strong. I feel I have grown in confidence. ...the next time I feel challenged and scarred, I will read through the article and give myself a boost’. Thus she engaged consciously with the reading, putting herself into the reading and the writing. She also wrote of the challenge of becoming a part of a community of experts. Initially, she had felt intimidated and did not speak out. But she wanted to be successful academically and applied herself to her writing and reading so as to hear other voices and ‘speak the language’ that she wanted and aspired to.

⁵ Ivanič, (1998). ‘Introduction’ to *Writing and Identity: the discursual construction in academic writing*

Established agency in learning practices

A sense of the power of reading or writing and learning and that one could take on that power, enabled agency – which includes passion and enjoyment. In terms of relating to the text of her readings, in her September journal, Gugu quoted from one reading, then explained the point, and then gave a second quote which she related to her own experience. She created a cycle between the introduction and conclusion, making a statement, followed by an explanation, then relating to her own experience, followed by a repeat cycle. She ended with a statement summing up the importance of what she had read, together with her opinion of the situation (of the importance of arts in education). This seems illustrative of development of an authorial voice.

In her first entry, Maggi had explained that she had decided to register for this degree because she was tired of her work as a teacher and had lost motivation and a connection with her learners. In taking on these studies, she hoped to reignite her interest and passion as an educator. She wrote regular journal entries about her progress and her learnings. In reflecting on her development over the course, Maggi wrote that she had discovered that she was a very interested learner and as a result could relate to her learners again. After a couple of months of not fitting in and feeling unsure, she felt she had found her niche ‘I was gobsmacked when I realised that it was up to me; it is you who allow yourself, depending on the effort you make, to ‘come in’ or ‘stay out’.’ (jnl12). She also wrote that she had found that she tended to be more analytical and that she had definitely become more confident as a writer. This was not to say that she did not still need lots of practise in writing academic essays, but rather than being put off or easily intimidated by ambiguous topics, she said that she could now rise to the challenge they presented. A couple of weeks later, she wrote of her elation upon receiving an assignment back where her lecturer had commented that she was developing sound academic essay writing skills. She mentioned that she had thoroughly enjoyed working on that assignment and felt ready to tackle further ones. She claimed that she was ‘picking up pointers’ as she went along and believed she would be ‘a different (academically stronger) person by the time I reach my destination’ (jnl19).

An example of how journals help to ‘re-author’ students’ stories about themselves into alternate stories (or the positioning and repositioning into more independent agency) can be found in what Gadija narrated about herself. At first, she was reluctant to write journal entries; however, she

grew to reap some benefits from the exercise. She referred to coming to UCT as both ‘a culture shock and an academic stress’. She claimed that the journaling was enjoyed as a stress relief outlet as well as a developmental tool:

it provided for me a space where I could write how I felt without the fear of writing ‘the wrong thing in a wrong way’. What was great was to receive constructive feedback which included good suggestions. The feedback never made me feel that I was unable to or had no ability to. It was positive. The personal – one to one basis of the journaling process put me at ease with my own writing and developing my own style or sense of writing, no pressure or stress. It made me want to write more and in this way I explored how I felt about what I was doing both at UCT, what I was writing about at that moment and how I was writing about it. In an enjoyable way I was saying a lot but in writing.
(Gadija:CI)

Here, her development in reflective functioning enabled her agency – a sense of becoming. She later commented that this developed her into being able to write and publish academic papers. In her reflection on a critical incident in the course, Gadija listed some benefits she saw from the exercise of journal writing; she mentioned that her writing would ‘flow without self-consciousness or inhibitions’, that she would make meaning out of what she expressed so that her ‘journal could be a tool for growth through critical reflection’, that she came to realize that she could connect new information with what she already knew, and that her ‘authentic voice’ in her journal was text upon which she reflect. All of this is illustrative of a dialogic development of voice; she was now able to construct meaning through expression and reflection on this expression – thus, she had agency in her writing and learning. She demonstrated much agency in the way in which she implemented what she learnt almost immediately in her teaching environment. In her RE she wrote that she had lost her fear of writing. Her newly found confidence in writing led her to taking on and enjoying new challenges at work, ‘such as co-ordinating new programmes (which included writing manuals, policies and educating teachers)’ (RE), (as well as a decision to enter a Master’s programme). However, some of her colleagues accused her of showing off her new talents.

Another example of the dialogic development of voice is given by Pedro, who claimed that interacting with a journal partner gave ‘reflection, retrospect and insight’ and that it helped in looking objectively at one’s own reading, opinions and understanding. He said that this helped with insight on how to fit into the mould of the academic writer. Pedro and his journal partner developed a close relationship, with regular journal exchanges, and were able to give constructive comments to each other around their writing and their understandings of the

readings and course topics. This encouraged them further in their learning and writing. The development noticed through regular journal communications was also a source of motivation. In his RE Pedro, commented that his journal partner, ‘was an encouragement as his comments were often very motivating. In his journal entries I could even see how he has grown’ (Pedro:RE).

In an early entry, Wilma commented ‘I lack confidence to be the voice I can be. I hope I will learn how to speak publicly and be more assertive’ (Wilma:2). Later, Wilma wrote that she found writing to be an outlet. She claimed it was like donning more confident robes; she felt she was better at putting her thoughts to paper than saying things out loud. She felt less threatened in writing and that it gave her the chance to reflect quietly and the opportunity to ‘restate’ herself more clearly. She had come a long way from ‘I lack confidence to be the voice I can be’ (Wilma:2) to being the voice she wanted to be.

On arrival, Noluntu wrote that she was very concerned about how she appeared, due to her lack of technological knowledge (the practical skills and the discourse). She was also keen to learn these skills in order to be able to apply them in her teaching work, for example to ‘improve’ her story telling methods. Even having this purpose in mind – a projection into the future (cf. Emirbayer & Mische, 1998), appears to have promoted agency; it spurred on her learning in this area. She related in her mid-year reflection how excited she was to be at a great learning centre with modern learning facilities. She stated, ‘I have moved from the known to the unknown. I am busy to master the unknown’ (RE:May). Apart from her learnings in the technological arena, she had also enjoyed discovering the library, its workings and offerings. She wrote of the new words she had to acquaint herself with, such as ‘argue, debate, critically discuss’. She also related that her writing style had changed, that she had come to understand that she needed to aim for clarity and to indicate the ideas she had extracted from her readings.

In his first reflective essay, Marlon commented on his maturation in academe:

To write is the *bridge* between success and failure. I learnt that if I were just passively reading and not making notes a lot of key ideas are lost. I found it energizing to look at my own comments of a text and put in my own questions and comments. (Marlon:RE1)

He also reflected on his formal academic writing, stating that he had felt he could have written more in his previous essay and that this was an exciting development for him because he had begun the year experiencing tremendous anxiety about writing. He had added that he found that it was initially quite difficult to structure his thoughts and create a flowing style in his writing. During the process of writing his first assignment, he wrote in his journal that at times he had felt he was ‘going to crack’. In one of his final journal entries, whilst preparing for his literature review assignment, he wrote of the excitement he was experiencing, that he was ‘thrilled’ with the topic he had chosen and continued to discuss a ‘fascinating’ article he had found.

Already established agency – in possession of cultural capital

I have mentioned the correlation of agency and possession of cultural capital. It is clear that students coming to the institution without possession of its particular cultural capital find it harder to take on agency within its practices. The lack of cultural capital engenders more barriers and fewer perceived allowances. A handful of students in the course came with the institutional cultural capital and were therefore more confident from the start and took on agency in their learning and writing fairly easily and immediately. Below are some profiles.

Sue was one of the few students in the course who entered with the cultural capital, and the confidence that comes with it, that agency in our literacy practices required, so she did not struggle to adopt the agency needed. She already knew how to do so. She approached us easily and often, often offered us resources she came across and regularly requested consultations in person and via email to clarify task instructions or to request reading and feedback or to discuss her assignments (for all courses) and her life. She was a hard worker and enjoyed explaining readings in her journals and assignments. She wrote notes on all of her readings, which she included in her portfolio. Her academic writing was albeit sometimes overly ‘dramatic’, but it had an authorial identity; she was not afraid to put thoughts to paper. She was also able to talk out, for example, in complaining about a mark or the library tutorial, and to justify her complaints – thus demonstrating both confidence and entitlement.

Similarly, although less confident and more tentative than Sue, Jacky was quite bold, engaged with her issues and was able to pick out specific issues that she wanted me to look at in drafts that she sent me:

I am sending my assignment – hope everything is okay, I think maybe I have not given enough of my own opinion, but I was running out of words and also I am not entirely comfortable with giving my own opinion - feels as though I am making sweeping, general sort of unsubstantiated comments. If you would look at my introduction and conclusion and let me know if they are not alright so I could change them before tomorrow I would appreciate it. (Jacky:May,email)

Her ‘running out of words’ meant that she was nearing the word limit for the assignment.

Also an English speaking white woman, Amy was confident to express her needs overtly. In her first journal entry she stated what she wanted from the course, with no statement as to what she was prepared to put into it – as if she was a customer or client to be satisfied, rather than a learner prepared to make an effort.

I need to know that this course will be effective and useful. Since I work full time in a very demanding post, as HOD, do sport, run additional classes for Enrichment and do extra lessons to supplement my income, I need to know that this non-elective course is going to be of benefit to me personally and as a teacher. (Amy:1)

Neo, schooled in Zimbabwe, and also equipped with a form of cultural capital, enjoyed and could relate to the readings; he was able to grasp most of them and see their point. In his journal entries, he would talk about the ideas that appealed to him from the readings and then reflect on how teachers could apply the ideas. In writing about his readings, he dialogued within his own writing, thus creating a discussion. He definitely took agency; in his August journal, he explained that he specifically chose his topic because it had been one field (in African music) that had been neglected, and that he believed that there had been a lot of misrepresentation of African musical cultures by colonial researchers. He felt that it was important to rectify this. He also wrote about learning from the literature review exercise in terms of how to search for information and select relevant material, and in terms of writing, he said that what he had discovered through making mistakes and correcting them had been a worthwhile pursuit towards becoming an academic writer.

Although agency in or of these learners appears to have been part of the institutional assumptions, it is evident that most of these students needed some time to learn about the allowances and requirements of agency and of voice in their learning and writing, and then they needed more time to practise these. Time was part of the pedagogy which I generated in the course; it was facilitated by the dialogical journaling exercise. The coming of voice was

developed through a learning of the allowance of, and practise at, dialogue, which promoted reflective functioning and, in turn, prompted agency, which incited voice in the students' writing.

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Chapter 8

Concluding Notes

In discussing Bakhtin's argument that language comes about through social struggle, Maybin (2001) explains that by implication, in this view of language, voice, too is come by through social struggle. In my research study, I have examined this struggle, as experienced by adult students at this (elite) South African university. My research is pragmatic, and takes a multifocal approach. Grounded theory provided an initial structure for my examination of the transformation of voice through emerging reflective functioning and agency in the development of an authorial identity. The synthesis of narrative analysis and discourse analysis in this examination, enabled considerations of correlations between what students told themselves about their writing and learning practices and how they carried out these practices, both before and during the course they took with me.

My objectives for this study were to better understand the transformations that were experienced by mature students returning to higher educational classes of wider access – especially with respect to their academic literacy practices, and specifically with regards to students' own 'voice' in their academic writing. My findings illustrate the considerable gap between the lived experience of adult students embarking on a higher education programme and the institution's dominant orientation to them. These findings highlight the need for greater institutional awareness of the lived social and literacy realities of students returning to postgraduate study, and the need to avoid construing academic language and literacy as straightforward or neutral skills.

Development in the positioning of self in writing and learning is slow and precarious. Certainly the majority of these students came from educational backgrounds that supported the perception of literacy as autonomous of social context and to be learnt as a set of technical skills (cf. Street, 2009). This perception was ingrained in these students and as a result, they came to the institution expecting to be quickly instilled with these skills (before they could get on with their studies). However, taking on agency in learning and writing and making one's voice distinguishable and 'visible' in writing is not a

simple acquisition; it is a recursive, chaotic, confusing, bush-wacking journey for adult learners. Further potholes are thrown into their paths when students have had a lack of access to the capital (economic, social and symbolic) of the institution, due to structures such as race, class, material resources or socioeconomic environment (cf. Ecclestone, 2007).

Full agency involves more than simply doing; it involves a consciousness in that doing. This consciousness involves an interaction of an individual's past experiences, future visions or intentions and present engagement – linking past influences, and envisioned consequences with present action – according to Emirbayer and Mische's (1998) 'chordal triad' of agency. For this, reflective action is needed (a cognitive agency). Thus, through the agency of reflective action, an individual can 'become' – to a new sense of self.

I mentioned in Chapter 2 Wojecki's notion of 'wounding learning practices', used to refer to adult learners' previous encounters with learning (within formal schooling environments) and how these contribute 'to weaker identities and dispositions to learning in the workplace' (2007:168). Wojecki (2007) claims his term is 'purposeful in understanding the legacies or effects of traditional, mimetic, and didactic formalized pedagogies ...[referred to] as the 'standard paradigm of learning' (2007:172-3). In other words, the learner's relationship to learning has been injured and therefore their identities to learning (and vocational trajectories) are affected. The negative and emotive experiences from their previous formal learning practices, Wojecki explains, shape the individual's perceptions of what learning is, and therefore frame how they engage with later formal learning. He sees a means of overcoming these wounding learning practices as inviting adults to tell and retell their identities of learning. In reflection, I think that in a sense, this is what the dialogical journals invited. Wojecki (2007) points out that the stories students tell about themselves may not be an accurate portrayal of their skills and abilities. However, he explains, 'The stories of learning that are continually told and re-told by individuals contribute to the development of learner identities – or the multiple ways in which adult learners see themselves in the world and how they interpret their participation and engagement with learning in the workplace and "lifeplace".' (2007:170). Earlier, he wrote:

To overcome wounds created through formal learning requires a degree of ‘unlearning.’ This unlearning is a process of letting go of old frameworks of knowing and being and seeking new, alternative, or differing perspectives and standpoints. Unlearning involves change. A change from the ordinary and typical – the taken for granted. Unlearning requires one to reflect, attempt new experiences in order to create new meanings and awareness. (Wojecki, 2005)

In Chapter 2 I also explained the notion of *migrating identities* from the theory behind Narrative therapy, whereby the migration of identities is mediated through a process of deconstructing and renegotiating. I suggested that the narrative of migrating identities in the transition to higher education for adult learners could be tracked along lines similar to those observed by Smith and Winslade (1997) in their stories from men migrating from the regime of alcohol. I observed similar themes in relation to many of my students’ own narratives of their transitions from their old literacy practices (including attitudes, beliefs, values and ways of thinking and behaving) to new practices of the institution. So, borrowing from Smith and Winslade’s (1997) findings, I suggest that migrating identities for mature learners in academia involve:

- a deconstruction of literacy practices in relation to the world, or, as situated in their previous social and educational contexts,
- a deconstruction of identity claims of these,
- a renegotiation of literacy in the learner’s life,
- a renegotiation of the learner’s relationships with literacy experiences, and
- a renegotiation of the learner’s relationships with others, situated within the new context.

As Smith and Winslade emphasised, these are not stages, nor distinct from each other, but inter-relate, feeding back and forth between each other as (students’) new senses of self emerge, or ‘become’.

My findings are illustrative of each of these themes. In reading through the narratives from the journals, I observed de- and reconstructions over time – in senses of selves, in relationships to learning, in writing and in specific aspects of these. In moving from the binaries of school knowledge (where there are facts and truths or untruths and errors) to diversities of opinion and knowledge at universities – with the need to therefore

distinguish voices concerned, I noted in the development of students' intertextual writing a gradual move – from established habit, through reflection, to action. The established habit refers to the enactment of old ways, for example, speaking or writing through the voices of others. Reflection includes the realization of new rules and allowances, and understanding of these rules and allowances – two different stages: realization can still coincide with confusion; understanding leads to clarity. Action refers to the manifestation or adoption of new rules and allowances. To these I attached the themes of old, odd and new voices. Through the reflections as a result of discursive practices, both in writing and in group discussions, students' understandings of their situated and socially constructed attitudes, values and allowances within their previous literacy practices were, to varying extents, deconstructed by them. This often entailed consequent confusions and challenges to their sense of self within their learning, through the chaos of not fully understanding the allowances or requirements of the institution. New values, allowances and beliefs came to be understood around their literacy practices, which affected, or drew out, new behaviours, relations (to texts and to others), and senses of selves within these practices. Examples of such socially constructed perceptions illustrated in my findings are those around the permission for students to have their own ideas (together with the new rules of expressing opinions, for example, involving argument and evidence and references to authorities), the negotiation of rules of students taking a role in their own learning and writing, and those of students bringing their (agentic, academic) voice into their writing.

What came through in the early journal writing, as I have illustrated, is an overriding fear of the institution, with expectations of being found out, of being found lacking, or found cheating (unintentional plagiarism). Generally, initially, these students constructed the institution as cold, impersonal, punitive, and involved in setting traps for them, and excluding them from an elite club with its own excluding discourse. I think that the institution needs to be made aware of these fears, and to know that many student voices are not being heard, and, in fact, are being actively suppressed – by default, due to the narrow, complacent and unexamined vision of academic activity in the institution.

Chapter 5 illustrated many of the differences experienced by students in terms of previous social and educational practices and those expected, or required or assumed and

practised at the university. Examples of stories of ‘wounding learning practices’ related by these students include an induced hatred for mathematics or reading, a perceived lack of real purpose to reading or writing for the individual learner – with these activities being regarded as chores to fulfill for others or for assessment, unengaging teachers, a disallowance of questioning or asking for clarity, a belief that they have no ideas of their own, or cannot write, and a belief that ‘knowledge’ is the perfect recall of texts given to them and that this ability to repeat texts perfectly makes the student a good learner. When reading and writing are seen as meaningless tasks, an inactive cognate self is induced, as opposed to the active cognate self that is drawn on when reading and writing are regarded as meaningful and necessary tools for learning. Their schooling and (social environments) often did not allow or make for learning relationships with teachers and peers in class – they had to keep quiet, (Ravi mentioned being socialised into ‘selfish possession of knowledge’ rather than co-operative use of it). Essentially they were treated, or appeared to be thought of, as non-thinkers. Learning was treated as a non-thinking or passive activity and something separate from their normal lives (for some, it took time to perceive a permission to link their learning to their own lives here). They were not (usually) asked for their ideas at school, so it is not surprising that some of them claimed that they did not have ideas of their own. In addition to such wounding beliefs or stories about learning, these students had to adopt new practices (attitudes, beliefs, values, ways of behaving) often attached to a language and cultural capital that was not their own. Such new aspects or practices included relationships within learning, questioning (an important aspect of academic learning), argument, discourse, reflective functioning, dealing with feedback, and use of technology and the library. I have spoken to each of the concepts of identity, reflective functioning, agency and voice as social constructs. All of these need to be consciously built up in learners and learnt as aspects of their literacy practices.

Ecclestone claims that transitions become problematic if a viable identity in one context does not transfer to another (2007:123). I think that generally the difficulties experienced by adult learners in their transferring identities, are not catered for or acknowledged adequately at the higher educational institutions that accept them into their institution. My previous chapters have pointed to some challenges, such as transitioning from being a

leader of a classroom or school (and regarded as an expert) to being a student (and regarded as a non-expert), from a learnt understanding of the good learner at school to that at university, from requirements of submission and subdual (as a school pupil, good employee or a respectful wife) to those of critical thinking, opinion and evident voice.

It is not only in learners that a process of unlearning is necessary (cf. Wojecki above); the institution too, needs to undergo a process of letting go, or unchaining itself from ‘old frameworks of knowing and being’, and seeking new perspectives and attempting new experiences to arrive at new meanings and awarenesses (ibid). As I have explained, neither identity nor culture are static; thus nor should the institution be (in its culture or identity). Our student population and their needs have changed since the apartheid era and its educational systems. On the other hand, globally, the higher education institutional student profile is also changing, as I have alluded to. Lots of assumptions are still made by the institution and by many teaching staff about the knowledges, skills, understandings, practices and needs that their students come with. In fact, there is a need for the university to re-evaluate and to change its practices (as in attitudes, values, beliefs and ways of thinking and behaving) in order to ‘meet’ their students (cf. Boughey & Niven, 2012; Boughey 2010; Thompson, 2000; Ivanic, 1998). Old standards (which are institutionally or socially constructed and seemingly frozen) need to be discarded. The institution needs to provide nurturance and aid to the reconceptualization of learners’ identities.

Helping students to realise their agency and find their voices is likely to require that academic practices are made explicit and that academics themselves think about how they can model the agency and types of voice they require of their students in their writing. For adult learners who do not initially possess the language and other cultural capital of the institution, the acquisition of agency, together with the academic conventions, such as referencing and critical thinking required by the institution or by academic discourse, is a process which requires time, space and nurturance from the institution. It is a journey for the learner in the institution, rather than a piecemeal aspect in need of a quick fix in a unit such as the institution’s Writing Centre. This journey becomes a narrative – of the writer in process, rather than writing in process. The student is a subject – author of their life

and destiny. It is as if the role of the student needs to be reinvented so that they are seen as authors of their own spaces in the university. This may be aided by changes in attitudes and perceptions in terms of institutional hierarchies within the institution.

Through my research I hope to have provided an insight into what may be involved in creating epistemological access (cf. Boughey, 2010) for adult students (in South Africa), involving changes in ideas, values, attitudes, behaviours and ways of thinking about learning and within literacy practices; in other words, undoing previous socially constructed values, attitudes and behaviours, renegotiating these and then reconstructing new (socially or institutionally constructed) values, attitudes and behaviours. I am relating to access as a continual phenomenon in terms of it being created for students through their (academic) institutional paths.

Both agency and identity are relational concepts. The learner's sense of self and agency in their learning need social relationships. For a sense of self to be felt in writing, the learner or writer needs to see and practice writing as a social activity. So, academic writing and learning need to be promoted as dialogical processes. Writing performed as an isolatory or non-relational act does not make a huge call on agency (other than the act of writing), nor on a sense of self with the writing, and therefore not on a need for 'voice' to be present. The act of *relating* invites agency, a sense of self or identity, and a voicing of the self.

Feedback on writing is a potential means of promoting dialogue in learning. However it is a skill that often needs to be developed in the institution. In my experience (as a writing centre consultant, observing feedback on students' essays from tutors or lecturers), often the correcting of grammar was a major focus of the feedback, however, and it was usually done without any explanation of why or how it should be done, thereby not considering the meaning making process of the learner. I do believe good grammar helps – and could be part of a final proof reading process – but that correcting of grammar as a major focus of assessment or feedback to student writing often seems to disregard the constructive and creative process of learning or writing (it also privileges correct grammar over ideas and construction of argument). Promoting dialogue in learning, and

engagement with feedback by students themselves would require meaningful and developmental feedback from staff, together with their own engagement with their students in this feedback or prompting from staff to get their students to engage with it (in agentic ways).

I find the idea of voice useful as a concept implying a sense of becoming: a critical thinker and confident sense of self – once it is articulated; a gown, even if the student inside is not secure. However not all academic staff are convinced of the need for voice – it too is a construct within certain parts of the institution. I have acknowledged that the idea and concept of voice is a slippery one in the context of the academic institution or academic discourse. In fact, the academic (reflective, critical thinking, structured argument, convention-following) self could be regarded as a kind of persona, or assumed voice – assumed through practise, modelling (and mimicking to some extent) the use of conventions: speaking or writing as is expected at the institution; putting on a particular acceptable identity (the clothing of an academic style). In a sense the taking on of this persona could be regarded as ‘adopting agency’. The question may arise as to whether this is a process of finding a voice (their own voice) or assuming a voice, or both.

Hirvela and Belcher claim that,

As we confront the challenges of voice, we need to better understand the already existing voices and identities of the multilingual writers we research and teach as well as the process of voicing they may be undergoing. We need greater emphasis on trying to locate the writerly person, the identities and self-representations, ‘behind the written words’ of our students if we are to assist them meaningfully in their voicing. (2001:105)

The dialogical journal writing exercise proved to be helpful in a variety of ways – notably, promoting a sense of community in literacy practices (and their challenges), and therefore developing increased confidences and encouraging further development in students’ agency in their learning and writing, and with this improved or developed discursive practices, and reflective functioning, as illustrated in Chapters 3 and 7. It was also evident that some students did develop their academic writing skills through their journal writing. They gained confidence in terms of voice, agency, reflective functioning, discursive abilities, and were therefore able to understand and adopt technical academic skills or techniques such as the introduction-body-conclusion menu, referencing,

argument, and cohesion and coherence in their writing. However, whilst the dialogical journaling exercise proved useful and rewarding, it required a great deal of time and labour (and affective intensity) on our parts as course lecturers. Although this was not a typical postgraduate course in terms of standard and level of academic abilities, the build-up to peer-editing may be something to consider as a model – in terms of overcoming the isolation and intimidation that many postgraduate students put themselves into. In this way, it combats, to an extent, the need for intensive support from services such as a Writing Centre or private editors or tutors.

The ‘tradition’ of the higher education institution is also a social construct. With more open access, new traditions can be constructed in terms of students of the institution, and social relations, practices and experiences within the institution. The learners’ sense of self within their formal writing in the Arts and Social Science faculties at the institution, is communicated through their voice – as a result of the agency (including reflective functioning) that they have taken on.

Limitations of this study and possibilities for further research

This study is offered as an initial picture of transformations within literacies and migrating identities. Its confines point to opportunities for further research, some of which I list here. Firstly, the data was limited to the journal entries; it would have been useful to conduct interviews in order to check or confirm my interpretations or to probe further into what they had written. In addition, the analysis of my data was reliant on my interpretations of the data. It may also have been useful to involve the students in commenting on my interpretations of their journal entries. However further complexities are likely to arise from such an exercise. It would also be difficult to ensure such feedback, due to time and workload involved once these students had returned to their jobs.

The study was only conducted over one year; the first year of the students’ entry to their course. Thus, it merely presents an analysis of the students’ initial transition, or stages of migration into a sense of self within the academic community. A more longitudinal study would offer deeper insights into experiences towards more established voices and

authorial identities in the academic institution. In addition, I did not analyse actual development in the students' academic writing, but simply what they wrote about their experiences at the institution, and their academic literacy practices, development, and changes. A comparative and detailed focus on academic writing alongside what these students related would be useful in understanding how voice and agency actually manifest in their formal academic writing. It may also be interesting to examine the actual standards required, and views of the academics at the institution in this regard, as compared to students' perceptions of their writing.

It is important to acknowledge that the data and the information elicited would have been affected by the journal partner-groupings, and their combinations of personalities, genders and cultural backgrounds. Within the study, more detailed comparisons along gender and racial lines are possible, and a study of the writing relationships across these lines is potentially interesting.

As I have outlined in Chapter 1, education in South Africa has a unique history in terms of the divisions politically sanctioned by apartheid. This study took place in the context of an elite (well-resourced and research-led), former white, university. Some of the students' experiences here are not necessarily typical of those experienced in historically black institutions in the country, or those regarded as less elite. For example, it is possible that institutional literacy practices in HBIs are more similar to those the students were used to. It is also likely that many of them would not feel so different from their peers in terms of race, language, and educational backgrounds. So, further studies could be undertaken to look at comparisons with other higher education institutions in the country.

My study also involved a sample of students which were not thought of as 'traditional' students, in that they had not followed an uninterrupted trajectory, from school through undergraduate study into postgraduate study, and they did not necessarily come from middle class educational backgrounds. It is possible that my findings could be generalised to other contexts and countries in this regard. A possibility for further

research could also entail drawing comparisons between the experiences of mature students in a classroom of wider access and those of younger students.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Research Consent

Research Consent

I do hereby give permission to Cathy Hutchings to make use of information I provide her with in my journal entries and formal assignments for the course, EDN523W for the purposes of her research project which examines the academic experiences of postgraduate students at the University of Cape Town and the value of Reflection literacy in developing students' academic skills and identities. I understand that my real name will not be used in her research and that she would respect my confidence.

Name:

Signature:

Date:

Contact telephone number and e-mail address:

.....

Appendix 2: Lecture topics covered in the course

Lecture topics covered in the course included the following:

- Introduction to Academic literacy and expectations of academic writing
- Creating an argument: different points of view
- Voices of others: issues around referencing
- Topic analysis and essay planning
- Thinking about 'Critical Thinking'
- Thinking about critical reading – towards an identity
- Reading strategies and text analysis
- Multilingualism in the classroom
- Peer reading and feedback
- Conducting research and writing a research report
- The role of writing in learning
- Coping with diversity – in writing and reading (and teaching). Reading and multilingualism.

Appendix 3: Readings covered in the course

Readings covered in the course included the following:

- Angelil-Carter, S. & Hutchings, C. 1995. Plagiarism: academic theft or academic skill? *The Monday Paper*, 14(24).
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Appendix 4: Journal prompts given during the course

‘Academic literacy’ refers to skills such as reading and writing and even speaking in an ‘academic’ way. What general literacy experiences do you have and how do you feel about coming into postgraduate studies now?

Eli gama lithi ‘Academic literacy’ libhekisa kwi 'skills' ezidibene nokubhala, nokufunda nokuthetha ngendlela eyamkelekileyo edyunivesithi. Zeziphi iixperiences zeliteracy onazo kwaye uziva njani ngokungena kwiipostgraduate studies ngoku?

What is your understanding of ‘academic literacy’, ‘academic writing’, or ‘academic language’? What do you expect or need out of an academic literacy course? Write about your academic background and focus on your history of writing. How would you define your view of knowledge? Also, why have you chosen to do the B.Ed. degree?

How does the Lytle and Botel reading relate to your own experience as a writer and as a teacher?

The other reading outlines four views of learning and the editors have included some prompts for thinking about the texts. Reflect on these in your journal.

(You will become well-acquainted with debates around OBE – Outcomes based education – this year). What are your reflections on Freire’s ideas – could you relate them to your own education and reading?

Try an exercise – take 3 assignment topics and comment on the types of voice/perspectives you could tackle them with. How would you feel within each of the perspectives?

How does the LILT extract on generating effective writing techniques appeal to you or conflict with your own views or practices?

How do you feel about your identity in the academic culture? In what ways do you fit and not fit into the academic culture?

How do your writing and identity affect each other and how do you think your reading and your identity affect each other?

What is your understanding of ‘critical thinking’? How do you think referencing could be of use? What would your response be to the four stories we have included in your reading this week?

Despite the fact that guidelines are available, for example, in course handbooks, many students seem to struggle a great deal with the issue of referencing in their writing. Why do you think this is so?

If you have struggled yourself with this issue, please explain.

Do you think there are cultural factors involved? If so, what are these?

Write about your experiences and feelings about the issue of different languages in the classroom.

What do you feel about multilingualism in the classroom and how could you 'asset-ize' multilingualism in the classroom?

Note how references are used in these readings! Your journal entry on your readings this week may reflect on one or more of these readings. Write about your response to the issues raised in the article(s) – what do they raise for you? What do you think? How do you feel? What is left unanswered for you?

How do you regard the issue of feedback on your writing and to your learners' writing?

Reflect on the process of your assignment and how you are feeling about the course so far.

Reflection on the term – what have you learnt, what is missing still/should be added to the course.

This quarter we would like you to reflect in your journal entries on your lectures and readings and comment on how their content is relevant to you as an educator and as a learner.

Second semester: Journal entries involved students writing about their own writing tasks – reflecting on them and getting responses to build up their ideas. Also about their reading and responding to each other's drafts.

Appendix 5: Profile of sample, with individual details

Pseudonym	Gender	Race	Home language	Professional status	Home locality	Part/ Full time
ABONGA	M	B	Foreign (African)	Unemployed	Congo	Full
AMY	F	W	English	Primary teacher	Cape Town	Part
ATHI	M	B	Setswana	Secondary teacher	Botswana	Full
AWETHU	F	B	Xhosa	Primary teacher	Cape Town	Part
AYANDA	M	B	Xhosa	Secondary teacher	Eastern Cape	Full
BOTSHELO	M	B	Setswana	Secondary teacher	Botswana	Full
BRIAN	M	W	English	HE lecturer	Cape Town	Part
CAMERON	M	C	Afrikaans	Secondary teacher	Cape Town	Part
CARMA	F	C	Afrikaans	Secondary teacher	Cape Town	Part
DINO	M	B	Setswana	Secondary teacher	Botswana	Full
DONI	M	C	English	Secondary teacher	Cape Town	Part
DORA	F	C	Afrikaans	Primary teacher	Cape Town	Part
FANA	M	B	Setswana	Secondary teacher	Botswana	Full
FUNEKA	F	B	Xhosa	Secondary teacher	Cape Town	Part
GADIJA	F	C	English	Administration - HE	Cape Town	Part
GODWIN	M	B	Setswana	Unemployed	Botswana	Full
GUGU	F	B	Setswana	Secondary teacher	Botswana	Full
HESTA	F	C	English	Secondary teacher	Cape Town	Part
HETTIE	F	C	English	Retired Secondary teacher	Cape Town	Full
HLENGIWE	F	B	Setswana	Secondary teacher	Botswana	Full
JACKY	F	W	English	Teacher Primary	Cape Town	Part
JASMINE	F	C	English	Deputy Principal - Secondary	Cape Town	Part
KEVIN	M	W	English	Secondary teacher	Cape Town	Part
KHAN	M	C	English	Secondary teacher	Cape Town	Part
KHATU	M	B	Setswana	Principal - Secondary	Botswana	Full

KHUBANI	M	B	Xhosa	Secondary teacher	Cape Town	Part
KWANDIE	F	B	Setswana	Deputy Principal - Secondary	Botswana	Full
LENDY	F	C	Afrikaans	Secondary teacher	Cape Town	Part
LINDIWE	F	B	Xhosa	Secondary teacher	Eastern Cape	Full
LUNGISA	M	B	Xhosa	Secondary teacher	Cape Town	Part
LUTHO	M	B	Setswana	Secondary teacher	Botswana	Full
MAGGI	F	C	Afrikaans	Secondary teacher	Cape Town	Part
MARLON	M	C	English	Secondary teacher	Cape Town	Part
MPHO	F	B	Setswana	Secondary teacher	Botswana	Full
MUSA	F	B	Setswana	Deputy Principal - Secondary	Botswana	Full
NEO	M	B	Foreign (African)	Secondary teacher	Zimbabwe	Full
NOLUNTU	F	B	Xhosa	Teacher Primary	Cape Town	Part
NOMONDE	F	B	Xhosa	Secondary teacher	Cape Town	Part
OMPILE	M	B	Setswana	Secondary teacher	Botswana	Full
PEARL	F	C	Afrikaans	Secondary teacher	Cape Town	Part
PEDRO	M	C	Afrikaans	Principal - Secondary	Cape Town	Part
PHEKO	M	B	Setswana	Secondary teacher	Botswana	Full
PHENDU	M	B	Setswana	Secondary teacher	Botswana	Full
PHUMLA	F	B	Setswana	Secondary teacher	Botswana	Full
QAGAMBA	F	B	Setswana	Secondary teacher	Botswana	Full
QUEENIE	F	B	Xhosa	Secondary teacher	Cape Town	Part
RAVI	F	B	Setswana	Secondary teacher	Botswana	Full
RITSIE	F	B	Xhosa	Secondary teacher	Cape Town	Part
SABELO	M	B	Setswana	Secondary teacher	Botswana	Full
SARA	F	C	English	Unemployed Secondary teacher	Cape Town	Part
SIBAHLE	F	B	Xhosa	Secondary teacher	Cape Town	Part
SIHLE	F	B	Xhosa	Primary teacher	Cape Town	Part
SISANDA	M	B	Setswana	Secondary teacher	Botswana	Full

SIYA	M	B	Setswana	Secondary teacher	Botswana	Full
SUE	F	W	English	Secondary teacher	Cape Town	Part
THATO	M	B	Setswana	Secondary teacher	Botswana	Full
THEMBI	F	B	Setswana	Secondary teacher	Botswana	Full
THOBELA	M	B	Xhosa	Secondary teacher	Cape Town	Part
UNA	F	C	English	Primary teacher	Cape Town	Part
VERA	F	C	Afrikaans	Secondary teacher	Cape Town	Part
VIWE	F	B	Setswana	Secondary teacher	Botswana	Full
VUYISWA	F	B	Setswana	Secondary teacher	Botswana	Full
VUYO	M	B	Setswana	Principal - Secondary	Botswana	Full
WILMA	F	C	English	Primary teacher	Cape Town	Full
XOLANE	M	B	Setswana	Secondary teacher	Botswana	Full
XOLISA	F	B	Xhosa	Secondary teacher	Cape Town	Part
YANGA	M	B	Setswana	Secondary teacher	Botswana	Full
YONELA	F	B	Xhosa	Secondary teacher	Cape Town	Part
ZIMASA	F	B	Setswana	Secondary teacher	Botswana	Full
ZUKISANI	M	B	Setswana	Principal - Secondary	Botswana	Full

Appendix 6: Profile of sample

70 Students

Gender ¹	Race ²	Home language	Professional status	Home locality	Part/ Full time
F: 38	B: 48	Afrikaans: 8	Primary teacher: 8	Botswana: 30	Full: 36
	F:23	F:6	F:8	F:12	F:15
M: 32	M:25	M:2	M:0	M:18	M:21
	C: 17	English: 15	Secondary teacher: 49	Cape Town: 36	Part: 34
	F:12	F:10	F:22	F: 26	F:24
	M:5	M:5	HE³ lecturer: 1	M: 10	M:10
	W: 5	Xhosa: 15	F:0	South Africa: 2	
	F:3	F:11	M: 1	F:1	
	M:2	M:4	School Leadership: 7	M: 1	
			F:3		
			M:4		
		Foreign	HE Administration: 1	Foreign (Africa): 2	
		(African): 2	F:1	F: 0	
		F:0	M:0	M: 2	
		M:2	Unemployed: 3		
			F:1		
		Setswana: 30	M:2		
		F: 12	Retired: 1		
		M:18	F:1		
			M:0		

¹ F: female; M: male.

² B: black; C: coloured; W: white.

³ HE: higher education.

Appendix 7: Drop outs

7 (6 female, 1 male) all local part time students,
(5 coloured females, 1 black male, 1 black female)

WILMA	F	C	English	Primary teacher	Cape Town	Full
DORA	F	C	Afrikaans	Primary teacher	Cape Town	Part
VERA	F	C	Afrikaans	Secondary teacher	Cape Town	Part
PEARL	F	C	Afrikaans	Secondary teacher	Cape Town	Part
XOLISA	F	B	Xhosa	Secondary teacher	Cape Town	Part
AWETHU	F	B	Xhosa	Primary teacher	Cape Town	Part
KHAN	M	C	English	Secondary teacher	Cape Town	Part

Appendix 8: Overview of changes in student enrolments between 1994 and 2011, at the institution in which this study took place

I have created the following tables based on data passed on to me by Jane Hendry, from the UCT Institutional Information Unit. I chose to focus on the intakes of 5 years through the period since Democracy. I also focused in particular on the Humanities faculty, as this is where the students in this study were based.⁴

Table 1: Total undergraduate plus postgraduate head count⁵ of students, and percentage of whom were registered in the Faculty of Humanities

	1994	1999	2002	2007	2011
TOTAL	14847	16416	18994	21419	25352
% of whom are in Humanities	36%	29%	28%	27%	29%

Table 1.1: Undergraduate student enrolments

	1994	1999	2002	2007	2011
TOTAL	10570	11373	13449	15367	17280
% of whom are in Humanities	38%	30%	31%	29%	33%

Table 1.2: Postgraduate student enrolments

	1994	1999	2002	2007	2011
TOTAL	3839	4926	5545	6052	8072
% of whom are in Humanities	28%	23%	23%	21%	21%

Table 2: Percentage of total head count of student enrolments by population group

	1994	1999	2002	2007	2011	% Change
Black South African % of total student population	18%	27%	27%	18%	22%	+4
% of whom are in Humanities	51%	31%	27%	13%	18%	-32
Coloured % of total student population	13%	14%	14%	13%	14%	+1
% of whom are in Humanities	43%	17%	18%	16%	19%	-24
South African Indian % of total student population	4%	7%	7%	7%	7%	+3
% of whom are in Humanities	23%	4%	3%	3%	3%	-20
White % of total student population	55%	52%	51%	40%	36%	-11
% of whom are in Humanities	31%	48%	52%	41%	36%	-5
International % of total student population	10%			19%	19%	+9
% of whom are in Humanities	30%			25%	21%	-9

⁴ It is important to note that during this period, there have been some restructurings of faculties, for example, the Faculty of Fine Arts and Architecture which existed in 1994, has now been divided between the Faculties of Humanities and Engineering. This would affect the statistical picture.

⁵ In a head count total, students are counted as units even if they are part-time students taking less a full-time curriculum.

Table 3: Percentage head count of undergraduate student enrolments by population group

	1994	1999	2002	2007	2011	% Change
Black South African % of total undergraduate student population	22%	30%	28%	21%	26%	+4
% of whom are in Humanities	52%	32%	26%	14%	20%	-32
Coloured % of total undergraduate student population	14%	14%	15%	14%	15%	+1
% of whom are in Humanities	45%	18%	18%	17%	20%	-25
South African Indian % of total undergraduate student population	4%	8%	7%	7%	7%	+3
% of whom are in Humanities	23%	4%	4%	3%	3%	-20
White % of total undergraduate student population	51%	49%	50%	38%	33%	-18
% of whom are in Humanities	33%	46%	52%	39%	33%	0
International % of total undergraduate student population	8%			18%	16%	+8
% of whom are in Humanities	37%			25%	21%	-16

Table 4: Percentage head count of postgraduate student enrolments by population group

	1994	1999	2002	2007	2011	% Change
Black South African % of total postgraduate student population	9%	22%	25%	12%	14%	+5
% of whom are in Humanities	51%	29%	28%	11%	12%	-39
Coloured % of total postgraduate student population	8%	13%	14%	12%	13%	+5
% of whom are in Humanities	44%	15%	17%	11%	12%	-32
South African Indian % of total postgraduate student population	4%	6%	6%	6%	6%	+2
% of whom are in Humanities	26%	3%	3%	3%	3%	-23
White % of total postgraduate student population	67%	59%	55%	44%	40%	-27
% of whom are in Humanities	24%	54%	51%	47%	45%	+21
International % of total postgraduate student population	11%			22%	23%	+12
% of whom are in Humanities	28%			24%	23%	+5

Breakdown of Head count of student enrolments by population group

Black South African					
	1994	1999	2002	2007	2011
TOTAL	2721	4475	5166	3924	5700
% of total student population	18%	27%	27%	18%	22%
% of whom are in Humanities	51%	31%	27%	13%	18%

Undergraduate Black South African students					
	1994	1999	2002	2007	2011
TOTAL	2348	3364	3775	3189	4555
% of total undergraduate student population	22%	30%	28%	21%	26%
% of whom are in Humanities	52%	32%	26%	14%	20%
Postgraduate Black South African students					
	1994	1999	2002	2007	2011
TOTAL	354	1096	1391	735	1145
% of total postgraduate student population	9%	22%	25%	12%	14%
% of whom are in Humanities	51%	29%	28%	11%	12%

Coloured students					
	1994	1999	2002	2007	2011
TOTAL	1884	2223	2735	2869	3559
% of total student population	13%	14%	14%	13%	14%
% of whom are in Humanities	43%	17%	18%	16%	19%

Undergraduate Coloured students					
	1994	1999	2002	2007	2011
TOTAL	1520	1578	1984	2137	2537
% of total undergraduate student population	14%	14%	15%	14%	15%
% of whom are in Humanities	45%	18%	18%	17%	20%
Postgraduate Coloured students					
	1994	1999	2002	2007	2011
TOTAL	332	644	751	732	1022
% of total postgraduate student population	8%	13%	14%	12%	13%
% of whom are in Humanities	44%	15%	17%	11%	12%

South African Indian students					
	1994	1999	2002	2007	2011
TOTAL	609	1164	1333	1455	1673
% of total undergraduate student population	4%	7%	7%	7%	7%
% of whom are in Humanities	23%	4%	3%	3%	3%

Undergraduate SA Indian students					
	1994	1999	2002	2007	2011
TOTAL	468	873	996	1114	1196
% of total undergraduate student population	4%	8%	7%	7%	7%
% of whom are in Humanities	23%	4%	4%	3%	3%
Postgraduate SA Indian students					
	1994	1999	2002	2007	2011
TOTAL	137	289	337	341	477
% of total postgraduate student population	4%	6%	6%	6%	6%
% of whom are in Humanities	26%	3%	3%	3%	3%

White students					
	1994	1999	2002	2007	2011
TOTAL	8108	8535	9731	8590	9101
% of total student population	55%	52%	51%	40%	36%
% of whom are in Humanities	31%	48%	52%	41%	36%

Undergraduate White students					
	1994	1999	2002	2007	2011
TOTAL	5359	5496	6669	5912	5744
% of total undergraduate student population	51%	49%	50%	38%	33%
% of whom are in Humanities	33%	46%	52%	39%	33%
Postgraduate White students					
	1994	1999	2002	2007	2011
TOTAL	2585	2912	3062	2678	3266
% of total postgraduate student population	67%	59%	55%	44%	40%
% of whom are in Humanities	24%	54%	51%	47%	45%

International students ⁶					
	1994	1999	2002	2007	2011
TOTAL	1516			4088	4652
% of total student population	30%			25%	21%
% of whom are in Humanities	10%			19%	19%

Undergraduate International students					
	1994	1999	2002	2007	2011
TOTAL	869			2732	2773
% of total undergraduate student population	8%			18%	16%
% of whom are in Humanities	37%			25%	21%
Postgraduate International students					
	1994	1999	2002	2007	2011
TOTAL	429			1356	1879
% of total postgraduate student population	11%			22%	23%
% of whom are in Humanities	28%			24%	23%

Table 5: Headcount of student enrolments by gender

Male						
	1994	1999	2002	2007	2011	% Change
TOTAL	8658	8752	9700	10784	12147	
% of total student population	58%	54%	51%	50%	48%	-10
% of whom are in Humanities	34%	35%	37%	32%	32%	-2

Undergraduate Male						
	1994	1999	2002	2007	2011	% Change
TOTAL	5996	5871	6679	7641	8008	
% of total student population	57%	52%	50%	50%	46%	-11
% of whom are in Humanities	31%	35%	36%	32%	32%	-1
Postgraduate Male						
	1994	1999	2002	2007	2011	% Change
TOTAL	2428	2835	3021	3143	4139	
% of total student population	63%	57%	54%	52%	51%	-12
% of whom are in Humanities	20%	38%	38%	33%	32%	+12

⁶ Data for 1999 and 2002 are not available.

Female						
	1994	1999	2002	2007	2011	% Change
TOTAL	6188	7642	9294	10631	13176	
% of total student population	42%	46%	49%	50%	52%	+10
% of whom are in Humanities	56%	65%	63%	68%	68%	+12

Undergraduate Female						
	1994	1999	2002	2007	2011	% Change
TOTAL	4573	5440	6766	7723	9248	
% of total student population	43%	48%	50%	50%	54%	+11
% of whom are in Humanities	50%	65%	64%	68%	68%	+18
Postgraduate Female						
	1994	1999	2002	2007	2011	% Change
TOTAL	1411	2103	2524	2908	3928	
% of total student population	37%	43%	46%	48%	49%	+12
% of whom are in Humanities	44%	62%	62%	67%	68%	+14

Table 6: headcount of student enrolments by formal qualification⁷

Occasional students ⁸					
	1994	1999	2002	2007	2011
TOTAL		314	501	976	1224
% of total student population		2%	3%	5%	5%
% of whom are in Humanities				65%	59%
U/grad diplomas					
	1994	1999	2002	2007	2011
TOTAL		425	708	654	956
% of total student population		3%	4%	3%	4%
% of whom are in Humanities				52%	84%
3yr u/grad degrees					
	1994	1999	2002	2007	2011
TOTAL		5383	6605	6666	7660
% of total student population		33%	35%	31%	30%
% of whom are in Humanities		57%	54%	44%	45%
Prof u/grad degrees					
	1994	1999	2002	2007	2011
TOTAL		5390	5854	7228	7691
% of total student population		33%	31%	34%	30%
% of whom are in Humanities		7%	9%	6%	10%

⁷ Empty blocks indicate no data was available.

⁸ Occasional students are those who are not enrolled for a formal degree or diploma.

Postgrad diplomas					
	1994	1999	2002	2007	2011
TOTAL		1001	906	991	1639
% of total student population		6%	5%	5%	6%
% of whom are in Humanities		4%	3%	16%	15%
Postgrad bachelors					
	1994	1999	2002	2007	2011
TOTAL		429	301		
% of total student population		3%	2%		
% of whom are in Humanities		1%	0%		
Honours					
	1994	1999	2002	2007	2011
TOTAL		644	827	996	1110
% of total student population		4%	4%	5%	4%
% of whom are in Humanities		7%	7%	38%	44%
Masters					
	1994	1999	2002	2007	2011
TOTAL		2265	2573	2906	3833
% of total student population		14%	14%	14%	15%
% of whom are in Humanities		9%	10%	18%	18%
Doctors					
	1994	1999	2002	2007	2011
TOTAL		592	719	1002	1239
% of total student population		4%	4%	5%	5%
% of whom are in Humanities		3%	4%	21%	21%